



# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

## *Ways of the Wise*

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कुसुमस्तवकस्येव द्वयी वृत्तिर्मनस्विनः ।  
मूर्ध्नि वा सर्वलोकस्य शीर्यते वन एव वा ॥

The ways of the wise, like those of flower bunches, are twofold. They either find a place atop all people, or else wither away in the forest itself.  
(Bhartrihari)

वित्ते त्यागः क्षमा शक्तौ दुःखे दैन्यविहीनता ।  
निर्दम्भता सदाचारे स्वभावोऽयं महात्मनाम् ॥

Renunciation of wealth, forgiveness in strength, absence of unhappiness in suffering, unostentatious pursuit of social norms—all of these come naturally to the wise.

स्पृहणीयाः कस्य न ते सुमतेः सरलाशया महात्मानः ।  
त्रयमपि येषां सदृशं हृदयं वचनं तथाचारः ॥

Who among thoughtful persons like you would not welcome the wise of simple heart—whose heart, speech, and action are all of one accord?

कर्णस्त्वचं शिविर्मांसं जीवं जीमूतवाहनः ।  
ददौ दधीचिरस्थीनि नास्त्यदेयं महात्मनाम् ॥

Karna gave of his skin, Shibi his flesh, Jimutavahana his life itself, and Dadhichi his bones; there is nothing that the great cannot give.

द्विः शरं नाभिसंघत्ते द्विः स्थापयति नाश्रितान् ।  
द्विर्ददाति न चार्थिभ्यो रामो द्विर्नाभिभाषते ॥

Rama does not need to put a second arrow to his bow, fix a second abode for refuge seekers, give twice to the same supplicant, or make a statement a second time.

He is indeed wise whose mind does not react though the objects of enjoyment come before him. This is the test. When your mind has attained to that stage, then only you can be sure that it is all right.

(Swami Turiyananda)

# THIS MONTH

Management of a diverse range of knowledge, attitudes, and skills is fundamental to the successful running of a knowledge society. This number addresses some of these issues, beginning with a brief look at **The Religious Organization**.

**Prabuddha Bharata—100 Years Ago** reports the pioneering work of the Benares Ramakrishna Home of Service.

Swami Satyarupanandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, elucidates how a rigorous value-oriented approach is inextricably linked with the **Quest for Excellence** in all walks of life.

Indian society has often had to bemoan the absence of effective leaders in various fields. In **The Leader**, Swami Ishatmanandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Narottam Nagar, analyses the qualities that go into the making of different

types of leaders and why India has often had to face crises of leadership.

Is creativity a rare personal gift or is it ubiquitous? What is its source? Can it be nurtured? What are its expressions? These are some of the questions that have been graphically addressed by Smt. Pritha Lal, Organizational Behaviour Specialist, Nu Skin Enterprises, Provo, in **Creativity: A Paradox between Method and Madness**.

There is hardly a person who has not been troubled by anger, and there would be many who desperately seek a remedy for their uncontrolled temper.

**Managing Anger**, by Swami Atmavikasanandaji, Ramakrishna Math, Pune, provides practical insights into the problem.

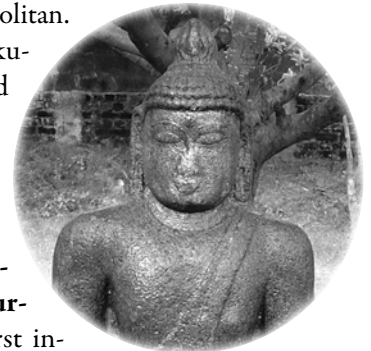
Swami Sarvapriyanandaji, Registrar, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, provides us useful tips in improving work efficiency in **Time Management: First Things First**.

**Understanding Leadership** is a lucid overview of leadership's diverse facets, how its meaning and function has evolved over the course of time, and how globalization and diversity provide it with a unique context in the postmodern world. The author, Dr Vinayak Rao, is former Academic Officer, United Nations University, Tokyo.

Mrs Alice M Hansbrough recounts Swamiji's early days in San Francisco in the fourth instalment of **Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda**. The transcript of these reminiscences has been made available by the Vedanta Society of Northern California. The text has been edited by Swami Chetananandaji, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis, and a group of Vedanta students.

Kanchipuram is the Varanasi of South India, equally hoary and cosmopolitan.

Dr Prema Nandakumar, researcher and literary critic, Srirangam, presents a fascinating pen picture of this multi-layered city in **Kanchipuram, the Four-fold Glory**. The first instalment focuses on Buddha Kanchi.



# *The Religious Organization*

SOON after he addressed the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda confessed to his American hostess, Mrs Lyon, that he had had 'the greatest temptation of his life in America.' No, it was not a lady, he added, it was 'organization.' 'From my travels in various countries I have come to the conclusion that without organization nothing great and permanent can be done,' he was to say later. But he was also acutely aware of the evils of organization: 'The moment you form yourselves into an organization, you begin to hate everybody outside of that organization. When you join an organization you are putting bonds upon yourself, you are limiting your own freedom. ... If one breaks a law of an order or society he is hated by the rest.' In newspaper interviews given in London in 1896, he mentioned: 'It is contrary to our principles to multiply organizations, since, in all conscience, there are enough of them.' Moreover, 'Organizations need men to manage them; they must seek power, money, influence. Often they struggle for domination, and even fight.'

The lines along which Swamiji resolved this dilemma are probably best expressed in what he wrote to his disciple Alasinga Perumal: 'We must organize our forces not to make a sect—not on religious matters, but on the secular business part of it.' This dilemma was not however unique to Swami Vivekananda or to the movement that he was steering along. For all religious organizations have had to live with the strengths and evils of organization.

### ***The Democratic Sangha***

Some time after he had attained bodhi, enlightenment, Gautama Buddha's mind was in a quandary: Should he explain to the world the truth he had just realized? 'Men who are overpowered by passion and surrounded by a mass of darkness cannot

see this Truth which is against the current (*patiso-tagamin*), which is lofty, deep, subtle, and hard to comprehend.' But after due contemplation, with the thought that at least some might understand the Truth, he decided to preach.

The five ascetics who were Buddha's companions during his period of self-mortification were the first to be converted to Buddha's way. Soon after, Yasa, a wealthy and influential young man of Banaras, joined the Sangha along with many of his relatives and friends. And within a short time Buddha had sixty disciples who were arhats. These he sent out, each in a different direction, to teach the Dhamma, 'for the happiness of the many, for the good of the many, out of compassion for the world'. And the Buddhist Sangha was soon growing by leaps and bounds.

When Buddha was growing old, his cousin Devadatta, who had always had a scheming mind, suggested that Gautama hand over the leadership of the Sangha to him. But Buddha categorically replied that he would not pass on the leadership to anyone, not even to the trusted and capable Sariputta or Moggallana. His devoted attendant Ananda raised the same question on Buddha's deathbed: How was the Sangha to be conducted after his passing? Buddha's reply was no different this time: 'Surely, Ananda, if there is anyone who thinks he will lead the Sangha and that the Sangha should depend on him, let him set down his instructions. But the Tathagata has no such idea.' So the Buddhist Sangha came to be organized on democratic principles with the Vinaya teachings as its code of discipline.

The democratic nature of the Buddhist Sangha could also have been, at least to some extent, a consequence of the republican nature of many of the confederacies (the *mahajanapadas*) where Buddha preached. This general structure of the Sangha

persisted throughout Buddhism's expansion across Asia. The Buddhist Sangha has therefore always been free of hierarchical control. While this has facilitated flowering of individual genius, it has often rendered enforcement of communal discipline difficult. More important, from the point of view of organization, it rendered the Sangha susceptible to external political interference. For instance, in China, almost from its very beginning, the Buddhist monastic system has remained under the rigid control of the state, to the extent that monks were even granted their ordination certificates by Confucian bureaucrats.

### **The Church on the Rock**

Not much is known of Jesus Christ's spiritual struggles or about his deciding to preach the advent of the 'kingdom of heaven'. But he did gather a circle of twelve disciples and commission them to preach and heal, thus making them his apostles. The Christian Church has had a long and complicated history, but its episcopate traces its authority largely to an apostolic succession beginning with Peter (the rock on whom Jesus said he would build his church) and the bishops he appointed. The Roman Catholic Church took this tradition to its logical conclusion in developing a well-structured ecclesiastical hierarchy within a papal monarchy that not only decided the canon, the creed, and the liturgy, but also wielded considerable political and legal power. The Eastern Orthodox Church, however, developed a synodical structure—more democratic and participatory, with a greater involvement of the laity in decision-making. The strong centralized hierarchy of the Roman Church always allowed it to exercise political influence way beyond its jurisdiction, while the democratic nature of the Orthodox polity rendered it more susceptible to outside political influences.

Christian churches are archetypal examples of organizational hegemony leading to dogmatism and fundamentalism, ethical decline, corruption, politicization of religion, and misuse of power. But they also provide very instructive examples of ways

in which crystallized organizations renew themselves through internal reform as well as intellectual, ethical, and spiritual dissent. Reforms could be as gentle as those initiated by St Francis and the Franciscans or more radical and divisive as seen during the Reformation. The Counter-Reformation, exemplified by the Jesuits, is illustrative of how a global religious organization initiates auto-corrective and modernizing measures.

Protestant churches highlight empowerment of the laity, decentralization of authority, and democratization of polity—all of which are exemplified by the Congregationalists. The Society of Friends, popularly known as Quakers, is another important bottom-up movement that has emphasized personal spiritual growth as a prerequisite for the health of church and community. Though their numbers have always been relatively small, 'they continue to make disproportionate contributions to science, industry, and especially to the Christian effort for social reform'.

### **The Fraternal Community**

Islam provides a striking example of a community whose leadership was largely derived from family ties to its charismatic founder, the Prophet Muhammad. The succession of khalifas as well as the Shiite imams all traced their lineage to the Prophet and his family. Even the hereditary heads of newly converted Muslim groups tried to trace their descent in similar fashion, and the Indian Khilafat movement, in support of an otherwise nominal khalifa based in Turkey in the early twentieth century, was evidence of the well-institutionalized nature of the khalifa's charisma.

That Muhammad could create a well-ordered *umma* transcending family and tribal loyalties—which had been the chief determinant of pre-Islamic Arab polity—shift the religious focus from a vibrant polytheism to a monotheistic allegiance to a transcendental sovereign, and nurture a spirit of justice and egalitarianism are indicators of his inspirational leadership as well as diplomatic and military skills. Creedal simplicity, ritual clarity, and

egalitarian social outlook quickly forged a strong communal solidarity that ensured the explosive territorial expansion that Islam underwent in the first century of its existence. These still remain important reasons for the continued growth of Islam.

Islam is distinct from Buddhism or Christianity in not promoting monasticism and in having a well-articulated socio-political agenda right from its inception. In the absence of the transcendental outlook fostered by monasticism, Islam's focus was on the life on earth. For the *umma*, religion soon got identified with the state. This conflation of religion and politics resulted in the supersession of spirituality by legalism, as is reflected in the dominance of the *ulema* over the Sufis. Much of the conservatism of Islamic society is a direct result of its legalistic orthodoxy.

It is worth noting that Islam in its early years of expansion was marked by a striking adaptability and forward outlook. As the Arabs expanded under the second khalifa, Umar, the conquered people—the Monophysite Christians of Syria, for instance—were allowed to keep their own religion and laws, live in peace, and be protected by the Arab armies against the payment of a tax that was less burdensome than what they had been previously paying. Similarly, much of the Islamic expansion in North Africa, Central Asia, and the Malay and Indonesian regions was the handiwork of Sufis who not only adapted themselves to local cultures and religions but also worked out a peaceful and healthy syncretism that resulted in some of the most important spiritual flowering that Islam has seen.

### **The Wisdom of the Laity**

The organization of these global religious movements is clearly out of the ordinary. Their perpetual vibrancy is evidence of this fact. To the devout they are expressions of the divine will. In Roman Catholic dogma the Church is the body of Christ in which the followers participate not just metaphorically but also sacramentally—by partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ manifest in the Eucharist. In the language of sociology, they have successfully

institutionalized the charisma of their founders—a charisma that in the first place was itself out of the ordinary. They have also evolved successful mechanisms for renewal and reform.

A centralized organizational hierarchy and committed leadership have often appeared to be essential to the sustenance and growth of religious organizations. But the dynamism of religious institutions is more often dependent on the vigour of the laity. One reason for Buddhism's unchecked decline in India is that the monasteries lost the vigorous support of the laity that they had received in their heyday. The Jain laity, on the other hand, has not only been always supportive of its monastics, but has also tried to keep up its tradition of personal spiritual discipline that has seen the community tide over adverse times. Again, the present global resurgence that Buddhism is witnessing is powered by the laity.

A strong administrative structure ensures stability and homogeneity and acts as a bulwark in times of socio-political uncertainty, but it often does little to foster individual growth and initiative or harness the numerous insights of individual members of an organization. Studies in group behaviour—of companies, markets, Internet users, traffic, and research groups—have demonstrated that, left to themselves, large and heterogeneous groups can cooperate effectively, coordinate their efforts smoothly, come up with solutions to practical problems, and generate insights on fuzzy issues that no expert could provide. Hinduism provides a striking example of this auto-regulation and how an absence of centralized control fosters liberality and creativity even as it renders a community susceptible to external threats. But for this 'wisdom of crowds' to be effective the groups need to foster diversity, independent thinking, and judicious decentralization. 'A self-adjusting organization is the great need of our time,' Swami Vivekananda had remarked. The organizations that are able to tap into the total wisdom of their followers will surely be the most successful in this 'self-adjustment'. Such organizations are also likely to be the most enlightened.



# Prabuddha Bharata—100 years ago

## *Benares Ramakrishna Home of Service Annual Report: May 1907*

**W**e have received the sixth annual report and statement, from July 1905 to June 1906, of the Ramakrishna Home of Service, or the Poor Men's Relief Association, Benares.

The total number of persons relieved during the year was 1379, of which 732 were men and 647 women. The method of relief varied according to the circumstances of each case. Thus 58 sick persons found lying in the streets, were sent to different hospitals in the city, and the incidental expenses were defrayed by the Home, and food was supplied. The number of indoor patients was 155, and that of the outdoor was 1166. Of these latter again, 947 required medical aid only, while the rest were treated and nursed at their own houses, by the workers. To the infirm and indigent, 2 seers of rice per head were given weekly in sixty extreme cases, and 13 persons were saved from starvation in the streets, by timely supplies of food. Besides these, relief in the shape of money and food was rendered to 25 special cases of respectable people needing immediate help.

The Home, it appears from the foregoing, has been doing an immense amount of good work among suffering humanity in the holy city, but its accommodation and resources are quite inadequate to the demands made upon them. An effort, we are glad to note, is being made to extend its scope and usefulness. A suitable plot of ground has been secured for the purpose and a sum of Rs. 21,000 is now required for the buildings. ...

Under the burning Indian sun, the giving of a cup of cold water, is a charity which is ever appreciated. How much good then will result from the endeavours to help the sick and dying people, who are moving with tired feet towards the end of the wearisome road of life, along which they have toiled bravely and patiently. It is religion, humanitarianism, and

enthusiasm which bind the workers at the Home, to the service of the sad and suffering, and bring them into brotherly union and living intercourse with their fellow-men. ...

We conclude by quoting the following from the touching appeal made by Sister Nivedita on behalf of the Home, hoping that it will go straight to the hearts of the charitable and meet with a ready response:—

“In asking for such help, I cannot feel that the Home of Service is exactly begging for charity. Rather it is calling for co-operation in undertaking a common responsibility. Every Hindu is interested in maintaining the beautiful traditions of Benares as the sanctuary-city, and in aiding her to cope with her civic problems. Moreover every district has had a share in thus overloading her generous shoulders.

“The Ramakrishna Home of Service, then, represents a spontaneous effort of the higher federation of Hinduism to come to the assistance of the local, or communal, or purely civic consciousness, in an age of crisis and transition. Its birth is in religion, but its goal, as befits the modern world, is civic. Religion inspires, but does not limit its activities. The Brotherhood seeks to serve the city. And there is plenty of evidence in the following pages that the Mahomedan is not left out of the scope of its mercy. In the fact that such service arises, and arises spontaneously, we find a proof of the undying strength of the Motherland. In the aim it proposes to itself, we read the adequacy of the *Sanatan Dharma*, to every phase of the development of civilisation. And I for one believe with all my heart that that self-same power which has pointed out to these heroic young souls the work so sorely needed at their hands, will not fail to bring also to their door the means of its sure accomplishment. Reader, whoever you are, are you willing to help?”

# Quest for Excellence

Swami Satyarupananda

EVERY thinking individual has a desire for perfection. This spontaneous human desire for excellence is behind every success or achievement story. No good musician is satisfied with his or her performance. Every artist knows that what is expressed on the canvas is only a finite part of the infinite beauty that one experiences within. Every manager needs to nurture this quest for excellence to improve both individual and corporate performance in every walk of life.

## ***Spiritual Values for Excellence***

It is no doubt good to strive for excellence in external work, but it is infinitely better to seek perfection and excellence within, for this will enable one to excel in any field. Corporate managers also need to remember that spiritual values far outweigh material values in importance. Material affluence may provide luxury and physical well-being, but one may still be wanting in the cultural, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of life. In fact, without a well-balanced and integrated development of personality, success and affluence alone do not ensure individual peace and happiness.

Every thoughtful person is forced to address the following question at some point in his or her life: 'What is the meaning and purpose of my life?' Business persons are bound to ask, 'How will my commercial, industrial, and business achievements enable me to become fulfilled and complete?' Again, a person is bound to interact with his or her fellow beings and co-workers, especially in times of need and difficulty. Without having nurtured love, unselfishness, and altruism, one cannot hope to gain from such interaction.

## ***Need for a Clear Vision***

In order to inspire and motivate oneself to work

for success, satisfaction, and fulfilment, one needs to have a healthy, robust, and realistic philosophy of life as well as lofty, clear, and practical goals to work for. The reputed British thinker James Allen observes: 'The mind is the master weaver. It weaves both the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstances.' When our thoughts relating to any project are clear and systematic, external circumstances too are found to aid success. Achievers have a positive mindset that converts difficult and intimidating circumstances into assets for success. People with a negative mindset are failures in general. The best example of how defective thinking profoundly affects one's being is provided by Arjuna on the eve of the Kurukshetra war. So, we must take every precaution to improve our inner life before we try for improvement in the external world, especially in the field of management.

Ancient Indian wisdom states that prosperity should serve one end alone: the general well-being of society at large—*sarva bhuta hita*. But this goal cannot be advanced if the individuals making a society do not live value-based lives. So, for individuals, the twin goals of *abhyudaya*, material advancement and physical well-being, and *nishreyasa*, moral and spiritual fulfilment, have been enunciated. When this comprehensive ideal shapes our thinking, our lives become both meaningful and genuinely successful.

## ***Means Are as Important as Ends***

'The ends justify the means' is often touted as a management maxim. According to this, if the ends are good, just, and desirable, then one may resort to unfair or unjust methods to achieve the same. Such thinking strikes at the very root of value-based management. If the means are unfair, then they will defile the entire system and affect the result itself,



no matter how useful the end-result may appear at the outset. History—from Nero to Hitler—bears ample witness to this fact.

Swami Vivekananda says, 'One of the greatest lessons I have learnt in my life is to pay as much attention to the means of work as to its end.' 'Whenever failure comes,' he adds, 'if we analyse it critically, in ninety-nine per cent of cases we shall find that it was because we did not pay attention to the means.' So, even small and trifling moral compromises should not be made in the means, as this would take one away from the goal. Unfair means can defile the face of even the greatest of successes and render it useless.

Every sustainable achievement in human society rests on the foundation of good and effective systems. A system is 'an ordered and comprehensive assemblage of facts, principles, doctrines, or the like, in a particular field'. System implies order, method, or a definite way of implementing things. Systems, when meticulously implemented, ensure success. When they are not implemented, chaos and confusion follows. To put an effective system in place, a manager must have good knowledge of its constituent elements. And the primary principle in an effective systems design is the principle of harmony. A successful manager would take care to minimize all reactions within the system and would also follow the path of least resistance.


It should be evident now that to have an effective external system one needs to train one's mind and systematize one's thinking. Internal confusion and disharmony is bound to get reflected in external results. Sloth and carelessness are two of the greatest enemies of systematization. Procrastination and delays can undo even the best of systems. And the prime reason for this is the lack of a strong will-power. Similarly, one needs to be careful and alert to ensure that every detail related to the work at hand is meticulously implemented. A moment's carelessness can undo hours of hard work. Once one gets into the habit of cultivating care and diligence, not only will work efficiency improve, but one will also get additional time for the pursuit of excellence.

## **Integrity**

Integrity is the very soul of successful management. Integrity implies an 'uncompromising adherence to moral and ethical principles' or 'the soundness of moral character'. Integrity is an individual virtue. But when a group of individuals jointly pursues an ethical course, then the group is rendered a value-based corporate.

Many intelligent managers argue that occasional dishonesty is part and parcel of being successful in business. Unfortunately, such managers know little of human nature or of universal ethical principles. No enduring success or good has ever been achieved by fraud or dishonesty. If we study the history of business houses that have had enduring success spanning generations, we will find that the managers at their helm possessed sound moral character and integrity. Conversely, individuals amassing wealth through unfair means invariably get exposed in time and lose both their wealth and reputation.

Integrity brings strength and courage. an upright person never tries to project a false image of him- or herself. That makes for fearlessness. A person with integrity is a person with deep convictions. This honesty and sticking to one's convictions make for character. Such persons can face and surmount all obstacles. Rectitude in one's dealings also inspires faith and confidence in others. Individuals and groups feel secure and comfortable dealing with such people. With such people around, business is bound to grow and prosper.

Genuinely successful managers know that their happiness depends on the happiness of others. They feel compelled to ensure that none of their fellow beings remain victims of poverty or misery. Living for others becomes a way of life with them. Social welfare is one of their most important corporate goals. The respect and dignity that such individuals command from society is, however, only a by-product of their actions. More important is the sense of fulfilment and bliss that they experience within. It is for this reason that students of management must expand on all sides. Their vision should be as broad as the sky, their heart as deep as the ocean. 



# The Leader

Swami Ishatmananda

**T**HE word *leader* is known to all: but not everybody realizes the importance and significance of the word. Besides, the qualities that make for a true leader are very rare. The survival, growth, and progress of every society depend largely on its leaders. And every society—every collection of living beings, be it a group, clan, class, herd, or horde—inevitably has a leader. If a leader is weak, indecisive, or short-sighted, the group he or she is leading is bound to be destroyed—be it human society, or a society of beasts, birds, or insects. If a leader is courageous, intelligent, and decisive, the people under him will surely succeed in all respects; likewise among other beings.

The word *leader* immediately brings to mind the image of a king or statesman, politician or general, boss or strongman. But human life is very complex, and in its different stages is guided, motivated, and governed by different leaders. The life of an individual begins in a family; the head of the family is the leader there. If he or she lacks in leadership qualities, all the members of the family suffer. The decision of the head of the family is often destiny for the other members of that family. If the family head decides that education is unnecessary for the family's younger members, then those younger members are destined to lead illiterate lives. Similarly, a student begins to grow in an educational institution; the principal is the leader there. If the principal is bereft of leadership qualities, the student's growth is arrested.

The head of a family, the principal of an institution, the chief of a village: such people, whom we usually do not consider as leaders, are our real leaders. If they fail to perform as true leaders—knowingly or unknowingly—they bring about a tremendous loss of human resources.

## Who Is a Leader?

Leaders fall into four categories, differentiated by the kind of work they do and the effect they have on others: (i) temporary, (ii) semi-permanent, (iii) permanent, and (iv) eternal.

*Temporary leader:* Those who influence and guide a small group of people in a particular situation for a limited period of time may be termed temporary leaders.

In the wake of accidents and natural calamities like floods and earthquakes, there may be an individual who meets the challenges of the occasion and leads, guides, or organizes people. He or she may or may not have the qualities which are required of other types of leaders, but is generally obeyed by the people, and is able to effect good results.

*Semi-permanent leader:* Those who guide and govern a small group of people for a period of time and influence them for good or bad, thereby making a mark on society, are semi-permanent leaders.

The head of a family, institution, or village; the abbot of a monastery, the CEO of a company, a military commander, an MLA, a chief minister of a state, and even a prime minister or a king of a small kingdom are examples of semi-permanent leaders.

Semi-permanent leaders ought to have leadership qualities. Lacking these, their decisions and guidance will be marred by mistakes and follies, and thus people under their leadership will suffer. In a small, and sometimes a big way, semi-permanent leaders may make or mar human society.

*Permanent leader:* Those who lead a whole nation or population, whose influence and teachings are followed from generation to generation in that nation or population, who also sometimes inspire other nations, and who create history and remain enshrined in it, can be called permanent leaders. Kings



like Ashoka and Akbar, military leaders like Napoleon, political revolutionaries like Lenin, statesmen like Abraham Lincoln, and politico-spiritual leaders like Mahatma Gandhi are permanent leaders.

Permanent leaders possess tremendous personal power and charisma and thereby influence their followers. In times of trial and tribulation, their followers neither doubt their leader nor question his or her personality. The important leadership qualities that we discuss below are absolutely essential for the making of good permanent leaders.

Many thinkers of present-day India lament the partition of the country, the problem of Kashmir, the creation of states on the basis of language, different laws for different communities, inefficient education policies, criminality of Indian law-makers, and other difficulties and tragedies faced by the Indian people. The point is clear: decisions of its leaders, past and present, are affecting the nation today. Some decisions taken long back will continue to affect the nation for generations to come. Hitler's leadership of Germany brought suffering to the whole world, a misery which has not yet seen its end.

Therefore, a democratic country like India needs to be very careful in choosing and accepting its leaders.

*Eternal leader:* Enlightened souls, great philosophers, seers—those who inspire not only a race or a nation, but the whole of humanity, whose leadership transcends all castes, creeds, and linguistic and cultural barriers, and does not remain confined to any geographical boundary, because they govern through unselfish love—are eternal leaders. Though they are born at different places, in different times, wear different dress, and speak in different languages, yet their ideals are one: Be good yourself and do good to others.

The problems of the world come not from these 'lights of humanity' but from their followers. Most of the time, the catholic teachings of these great ones are misunderstood and misinterpreted by their over-enthusiastic followers. Ironically, their message of love is often spread through hatred and violence.

### Media as Leader

In a remote part of India, where a television is virtually the only connection with the rest of the world, a group of young students insulted and abused their principal for a petty reason: he had arranged everything for them for a picnic. 'In a government institution, how could the in-charge take a sudden decision like that?' they said. The principal stood his ground. Infuriated, the students slapped the gentleman in front of others. The principal felt so humiliated that he wanted to commit suicide. Only timely intervention of the local people and police saved his life.

When the students were asked why they did this, they replied, 'Why, the students of Bombay also do things like this!'

'Bombay students? How do you know?'

'We have seen it in such-and-such movie.'

A day or two before this incident, a well-known figure who is labelled in media circles as a 'cultural ambassador of India' was vehemently advocating freedom of cinema, and denounced the cinema censor board. 'Let people select what they like to see!' he said. Freedom is good: but are we, the people to whom freedom of choice is given, capable of exercising that freedom responsibly?

In present-day society the media is very powerful, and has emerged as a kind of semi-permanent leader. The people working in the media—cinema, television, radio, and print—must exercise responsibility concomitant with the media's position as a semi-permanent leader of society.

Since the whole of humanity is affected by the interpretation or guidance of the apostles, messengers, and disciples of the great souls, they too need to have all the qualities of a leader—else they, the exponents, the so called torch-bearers of a particular faith, may transform nectar into poison.

### Qualities of the Successful Leader

Ancient Indian thinkers gave a lot of importance to leaders and leadership. A bad leader means not merely a single bad person, but a bad fate for many.

### Vidura Niti: A king's basic duties

- A king should wish for the prosperity of all and should never set his heart on the misery of his subjects.
- A king should look after people who have fallen into adversity and who are in distress.
- A king should show kindness to all creatures.
- A king should never impede the growth and development of agriculture and economic activity in his kingdom.
- A king should always do that which is for the good of all creatures.
- A king should always be ready to protect those dependent on him.
- A virtuous king is never indifferent to even the minutest suffering of his subjects.
- A virtuous king enlists the confidence of his devoted subordinates by zealously looking after their welfare.
- A king who renounces lust and anger, who bestows wealth upon proper recipients, and who is discriminative, learned, and active is regarded as an authority by all men.
- A king who desires the highest success in all matters connected with worldly profit should, from the very beginning, practise virtue. Prosperity takes its birth in good deeds.

### What a king must avoid

- The friendship of the sinful has to be avoided.
- Misuse of wealth, harshness of speech, and extreme severity of punishment will ruin even firmly-established monarchs.
- Evil-minded kings, due to lack of sense-control, are destroyed by lust for expanding their territory.
- A king's prosperity built on mere crookedness is destined to be destroyed.
- A king should never make a person his minister without examining him well. During examination, a king should reject those who are ungrateful, shameless, who have wicked dispositions, and who don't give others their due.

king Dhritarashtra, has explained the most important qualities a leader should have, and has also spoken at length on leadership and administration. Vidura's advice and utterances are known as 'Vidura Niti'. The Vidura Niti is a small section of eight chapters (33 to 40) of the 'Udyoga Parva' of the great Indian epic Mahabharata.

Vidura prescribes the following values for a ruler to be a perfect leader: simplicity, purity, contentment, truthfulness, self-restraint, patience, honesty, charity, steadiness, humility, faith, exertion, forbearance, sweetness in speech, and good company.

Kautilya, another famous thinker on leadership and statesmanship in ancient India, emphasizes that the foundation of an organization is its financial strength, its economy. No good organization or country can run effectively without having its economy in good condition. According to Kautilya, the objective of any king is to create, expand, protect, and enjoy wealth. A leader should know that spending wealth in the proper manner is as important as earning it. In his famous book *Arthashastra* (Economics), he tells the king, 'Be ever active in management of the economy, because the root of wealth is economic activity; inactivity brings material distress. Without any active policy, both current prosperity and future gains are destroyed.'

According to Kautilya, a good leader should know how to handle the masses and people with different temperaments, attitudes, and thinking capacity. Understanding people is the most important quality of a leader. Kautilya felt that a king or a leader should know the secrets of administration, which according to him include (i) *sāma*, counselling; (ii) *dāna*, offering gifts; (iii) *danḍa*, punishment; and (iv) *bheda*, separation.

Sri K V Rao, in his research on the 'Sundarakanda' of the Ramayana, found that all the best qualities of a leader are present in Mahavir Hanuman: (i) motivation, (ii) communication, (iii) determination, (iv) sharp intellect, (v) excellence at work, (vi) courage, (vii) commitment, (viii) mind control, (ix) self-confidence, and (x) integrity or trustworthiness.

Vidura, the step-brother and learned minister of

**Swami Vivekananda on Leadership**

Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest thinkers modern India has produced, is very specific about the qualities of a leader. According to him, the position of a leader is not for enjoyment but for sacrifice. He says, 'It is a very difficult task to take on the role of a leader.—One must be दासस्य दासः—a servant of servants, and must accommodate a thousand minds. There must not be a shade of jealousy or selfishness, then you are a leader.'<sup>1</sup>

There are two types of administration: by fear and force, and by love and loyalty. History shows that most leaders prefer the first method: by fear and force. But Swami Vivekananda advocates the second method of administration. In his opinion, 'The best leader, however, is one who "leads like the baby". The baby, though apparently depending on everyone, is the king of the household. At least, to my thinking, that is the secret [to being the best leader]' (8.428).

The administrator who wants to rule through love and loyalty needs a perfect character. He or she must be impersonal, equal to all, and above all, unselfish. Such a leader should draw love and respect equally from his or her followers. According to Swamiji, 'There is no allegiance possible where there is no character in the leader, and perfect purity ensures the most lasting allegiance and confidence' (6.135).

In a letter to Sister Nivedita, he divulges the secret of his leadership: 'I see persons giving me almost the whole of their love. But I must not give anyone the whole of mine in return, for that day the work would be ruined. Yet there are some who will look for such a return, not having the breadth of the impersonal view. It is absolutely necessary to the work that I should have the enthusiastic love of as many as possible, while I myself remain entirely impersonal. Otherwise jealousy and quarrels would break up everything. A leader must be impersonal. I am sure you understand this. I do not mean that one should be a brute, making use of the devotion of others for his own ends, and laughing in his sleeve meanwhile. What I mean is what I am,

intensely personal in my love, but having the power to pluck out my own heart with my own hand, if it becomes necessary, "for the good of many, for the welfare of many", as Buddha said' (8.429).

**Pitfalls to Effective Leadership**

One day in the office of a secretary to the Government of India, a very senior IAS officer and a few other high-ranking officers—assistant secretaries, directors, and so on—were drinking tea and chatting after their official work. Suddenly one gentleman displayed a newspaper and, pointing to the picture of a present-day national leader, said, 'He has been judged first in a popularity assessment by securing 47 per cent of the votes (of the readers of that particular newspaper).' The senior IAS officer looked at the paper with disgust, and shrugged and snorted.

His body language clearly revealed his dislike. He then looked at me and asked, 'Swamiji, why can we Indians not become good leaders and administrators? Though from 1947 we have travelled a long way, and statistics show that great progress has been made within these few years, yet we have lost our values and all self-respect. Why? What is your opinion about the degradation of leadership quality, degradation of moral values, and how we can overcome these?'

This shrug, this snort, these questions, can be seen and heard everywhere in India. This widespread disrespect for leaders is not a healthy sign.

There was a time when the world was mad to discover India. Adventurous people sailed over rough uncharted oceans to reach her shores. In prosperity, in wealth, in education, in spirituality, in every respect India was a beacon light. Pre-independence Indian leaders and masses joined the freedom movement not for post or position but as a sacred duty. They fought against the British not with a selfish motive but with a zeal for sacrifice. Why then do we find few such people or little of these qualities among our present-day leaders? What happened to our leaders once they began to rule the country?

Swami Vivekananda gives the answer to this question in two short words: 'Slave mentality'.

What is slave mentality? Swamiji writes, "I won't let anyone rise!" That jealousy, that absence of conjoint action is the very nature of enslaved nations. ... Our fellows in this respect are the enfranchised negroes of this country [USA]—if but one amongst them rises to greatness, all the others would at once set themselves against him and try to level him down' (6.286).

Indians were excluded from positions of national leadership for nearly eight hundred years. For forty generations we lived and worked under the ruling rod of foreign monarchs. Prevented from thinking any original thought, never doing any work according to our free will, subjugated, and dependent on the ruling masters, we slowly developed a slave mentality in our temperament and character. A slave under a tyrant master is humble and obedient; but when the slave becomes the master, he supersedes his master in tyranny. Mean-mindedness, jealousy, hatred, backbiting, short-sightedness, feeling inferior, and above all, selfishness are the signs of a slave.

When those with slave mentality become leaders, they will not allow anyone better than themselves in their administration. Shackled by an inferiority complex, they will always prefer that their subordinates be more unworthy than they. They obstruct the life and growth of anyone having personality, intelligence, self-respect, and other leadership qualities. This leads to an administration filled with sycophants.

Swami Vivekananda explains, 'Here in India, everybody wants to become a leader, and there is nobody to obey. Everyone should learn to obey before he can command. There is no end to our jealousies; and the more important the Hindu, the more jealous he is. Until this absence of jealousy and obedience to leaders are learnt by the Hindu, there will be no power or organisation' (5.216).


### **Reforming Leaders' Character**

India is a vast country, a sub-continent with a won-

derful variety of languages, religions, cultures, and climate. But with all this apparent diversity, she is one—even from the days of the Mahabharata. Krishna and Arjuna visited the north-east states like Assam, Arunachal, and Manipur. Arjuna married a Naga girl. Krishna's nephew came all the way from Gujarat to Assam to marry a beautiful princess of Assam. India was always united in her diversity.

One who would be a member of the Indian Parliament must be dedicated to the unity of India, know her history and geography, and have a fair knowledge of her social structure. He or she must visit different parts of India before standing for election, to gather first-hand experience of Indian social life. He or she must serve society for a minimum of ten years as a voluntary social worker, thus gaining competence to become a law-maker of India. Swami Vivekananda's words can be a guiding principle for all leaders: 'Three things are necessary to make every man great, every nation great: 1. Conviction of the powers of goodness. 2. Absence of jealousy and suspicion. 3. Helping all who are trying to be and do good' (8.299).

We know how a misguided leader, after gaining power, can create permanent and serious problems for the whole nation. Thus we must choose our leaders carefully, not out of emotion, but exercising our power of discrimination. Merely leaving one's antisocial activities and joining the national mainstream, or receiving education in some foreign land, is not sufficient qualification for becoming a leader. One who would lead should first prove his or her capability and integrity through social service. A capable leader means a prosperous nation.

If we love our motherland, India, we must be united to shake off the terrible jealousy from our character. Let us take this vow, repeating Swami Vivekananda's powerful words: 'At any cost, any price, any sacrifice, we must never allow that to creep in among ourselves' (6.286). 

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# ***Creativity: A Paradox between Method and Madness***

**Pritha Lal**

**B**EING creative is seeing the same thing as everybody else but thinking of something different—this is one of the simplest and most non-technical of definitions of an abstract concept, with very tangible implications. Creativity in different spheres of life is manifested in a variety of behaviours; we see this around us all the time. It shows in the way a string of flowers is garlanded around the image in our personal shrine and in the unique architecture of the Baha'i temple in Delhi. Its presence or absence is made plain when a talk on a rather mundane topic delivered by one individual may seem long and boring while a discussion on the same topic by another enlightens us to the core.

One wonders, is creativity a science that can be mastered? Or is it something that is genetic, something which only the 'gifted' among us are able to experience and enjoy in various life experiences? This article is a brief attempt to understand the topic in a little more depth.

We shall start with some technical definitions of creativity and try to understand what they mean for the average human being. We shall then delve a little deeper into the human brain and see if there are areas within it that can be directly linked to creative talent. We shall next look at some implications of creativity in our personal and professional lives and see if it is a skill that can be developed and mastered with time. We will conclude with some thoughts on whether a link exists between creativity and spirituality in our daily lives.

## ***What Is Creativity?***

We can start with this working definition of creativity:

Creativity (or creativeness) is a mental process involving the generation of new ideas or concepts, or new associations between existing ideas or concepts. From a scientific point of view, the products of creative thought (sometimes referred to as divergent thought) are usually considered to have both *originality* and *appropriateness*. An alternative, more everyday conception of creativity is that it is simply the act of making something new.<sup>1</sup>

Creativity is synonymous with the birth or making of something new and different. We often associate various art forms with creativity. The way Monet is able to capture, on canvas after canvas, the subtleties of light and colour playing over a pool of water lilies is a shining example of creative endeavour. Ravi Shankar's musical performances—which epitomize Swami Vivekananda's famous words, 'Music is the highest art and, to those who understand, is the highest form of worship'—are another stellar example of creative expression. However, during my limited experience in the corporate world, it has increasingly dawned on me that creativity is not confined to the arts alone, and that it has immense relevance in the fields of physical science and management, and also in our daily lives.

Before delving into some examples that explain this, we should understand one key concept that is almost synonymous with creativity: *innovation*. Richard Luecke begins his book *Managing Creativity and Innovation* by pointing out that the meaning of innovation lies in its Latin root, 'nova' or new.<sup>2</sup> It is generally understood as the introduction of a new thing or method. It follows that innovation is a by-product of creativity. Let me explain that with a very practical example.

To develop the highly successful Crest teeth

**W**hile innovation is 'doing' things differently, creativity is all about 'thinking' differently. ... Innovation is essentially the application of high creativity. It need not be restricted to just products; it applies to services, employee attitude, and across all levels. Innovation is a fundamental mindset pursued seriously by an organization. It is imperative to imbibe the culture of innovation. ... There is a need to include more people with a creative bend. India is known for its great art and literature. The same spirit must be incorporated in business and economics. ... Innovation is a spirit that evolves the mind, body, and spirit. In other words, one has to do things which no one else has done before to create a better tomorrow.

—Azim Premji

whitening strips that are available without a dentist's prescription in various stores worldwide, the FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) giant Procter and Gamble used some very creative thinking. Their scientists drew on the substrate technology developed in their family-care business and the research related to hydrogen peroxide in their laundry business to come up with these small strips which, when taped to one's teeth, visibly brighten them in a few weeks. What is remarkable here is not only the product, which turned out to be highly innovative, but especially the creative process that went on behind the scenes. Networking between two seemingly dissimilar departments led to a minor revolution in home dental care in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

Thus creativity and innovation go hand in hand, the latter often a direct outcome of the former. The question then arises: can anyone and everyone come up with ideas like that—simple yet revolutionary ideas that change the face of science, art, and technology the world over—or does it take a special gene or skill? That calls for a deeper look into the root of all human thought and function, the human brain.

### **Creativity and the Human Brain**

The brain controls 'lower' or involuntary activities

such as heartbeat, respiration, and digestion—these are known as autonomic functions—as well as voluntary movement and a variety of special senses.

#### **Left Brain**

Logical  
Organized  
Rational  
Fact-based  
Financial  
Detailed  
Analytical  
Practical  
Procedural  
Quantitative  
Planned

#### **Right Brain**

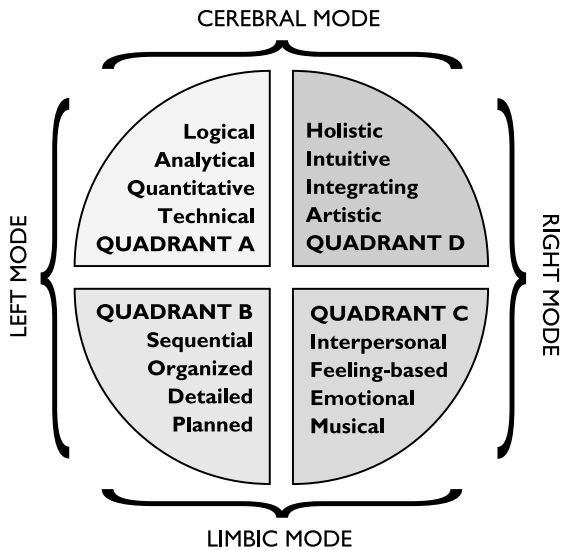
**Experimental**  
**Risk-taking**  
**Integrating**  
**Feeling-based**  
**Emotional**  
**Musical**  
**Spiritual**  
**Non-linear**  
**Innovative**  
**Creative**  
**Artistic**

The brain also controls 'higher' order conscious activities, such as thought, reasoning, and abstraction. The different higher brain functions are controlled by different parts of the brain. Specifically, the left hemisphere of the brain largely governs logical and rational thought, while the right hemisphere is primarily associated with creative and artistic faculties. This was first discovered by Dr Roger Wolcott Sperry (1913–94). A neuropsychologist and neurobiologist, Sperry studied subjects whose brains had been surgically separated into two halves to control epilepsy. He was a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in medicine in 1981 'for his discoveries concerning the functional specialization of the cerebral hemispheres'.

The functional specialization of the left and right brain hemispheres are highlighted below:

According to Sperry's research, the left brain is largely responsible for the logical and analytical faculties of learning and processing information, while the right brain displays non-linear and innovative patterns of thinking and assimilating information. This fascinating distinction shows up in people's behaviour. It would seem that some people's behaviour is influenced primarily by the right side of the brain, and others' by the left side: some people are very organized and detail oriented, almost to a





*Herrmann's  
whole-brain  
model*

*(Adapted from  
Herrmann  
International)*

fault, while others are scatterbrained and find great order in chaos. After reading about Sperry's model, I have tried not to be judgmental about these two extremes—after all, they are just following different brain hemispheres!

There is a further distinction in understanding brain function that can help us hone in on that part of the brain that supports or stimulates creativity, which is the contribution of William E 'Ned' Herrmann (1922–99), another great thinker in this field. Herrmann developed a 'brain dominance theory'—the theory that different parts of the brain are dominant in different people—and applied it to teaching, learning, increasing self-understanding, and enhancing creative thinking capabilities on both an individual and corporate level. He was internationally recognized for his work.<sup>4</sup>

### **Herrmann's Contribution**

Herrmann added to Sperry's left brain–right brain distinction, further dividing brain function into cerebral and limbic modes—the cognitive and intellectual contrasted with visceral and emotional thinking processes. As the illustration shows, this gives four quadrants, corresponding to four different ways in which we assimilate knowledge and information, react to our environment, and solve problems. This can be illustrated with an example:

Suppose you have decided to take a vacation with your family. That sounds like a fun prospect, doesn't it? The next time you are in such a situation, take a moment to watch how you react to it. If our brain dominance is in the A quadrant, we will immediately look at the logistics of getting to our destination, and find out what the ticket fare is, where the hotels are, what kind of weather we will have there, what kind of clothes we need to carry, and so on. If we are B quadrant dominant, we will focus on packing the right kind of clothing, deciding on our travel itinerary, sequencing every program detail—like plan-

ning the times we would see various places—and ensuring that everyone's role is clearly defined.

If we are primarily C quadrant people, we would want to know more about who is coming with us and what things we might carry for their convenience. We would pay attention to how excited we feel about where we are going, and making sure we take enough pictures to capture all the memories. Finally, if we are D quadrant dominant, we wouldn't worry about the details of the travel, but would just focus on getting there (doesn't matter how) and taking each day as it comes. We would look for new challenges each day and not worry about planning every detail. D quadrant people make exciting travel companions if you are embarking on an adventurous trip in the Himalayas. Risk-taking is their middle name; however, if one doesn't provide adequate time to the other quadrants, one might 'risk' making the Himalayas one's permanent abode after the trip!

The point is that for any decision to be completely thought out, we must use a 'whole-brain' approach, by giving due attention to each quadrant.

### **The D Quadrant and Creativity**

It is the D quadrant of the brain that has the greatest influence on creativity. The guiding principles that govern this quadrant are listed below:

- Seeing the big picture
- Recognizing new possibilities
- Tolerating ambiguity
- Integrating new ideas and concepts
- Bending or challenging established policies
- Synthesizing dissimilar elements into a new whole
- Inventing innovative solutions to problems
- Problem-solving in intuitive ways

Individuals with highly evolved D quadrant thinking are the best people to have on a creative team. They are able to think abstractly, come up with new ideas, and introduce fresh thinking into an existing system. They are innovative individuals who are able to transcend the real and artificial barriers that society imposes on them. Swami Vivekananda is, to me, the prime exemplar of a D quadrant thinker. What makes him special is that each of his faculties was so highly evolved that he could not only see the 'big picture' of the development of humankind and of spiritual growth in the world, but also put a plan in place to effect that development and delineate the exact steps which would see it through to fruition.

Swami Ranganathananda, the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Order, was another such personality whose D quadrant thinking was highly evolved. At the same time, he gave careful attention to detail in his projects and endeavours; one sees this clearly on reading *My Life Is My Work*, the pictorial tribute to him published by Nachiketa Tapovan. He was able to discuss with equal élan the fundamentals of children's education and complex spiritual questions, and would cross-reference his ideas in a multitude of ways, always doing amazing justice to the issue at hand.

Lesser mortals like us would do well to recognize in which quadrants we do most of our thinking, and which quadrants are evinced by our family members and colleagues; thus we can build on our strengths, transform our weaknesses, and compensate for quadrants in which we may be lacking by turning to others around us for whom those quadrants are dominant.

### **Practical Implications of Creativity**

So far we have looked at the preconditions to creativity as dictated by our brain—but creativity with parameters placed on it is a bit of an oxymoron. While there is a method in the madness that infuses creativity into a system, there is also the necessity for a free flow of thoughts and ideas for creativity to flourish.

Scientific understanding of creativity is far from complete. The popular belief that creative thinkers are few and far between is dismissed by Steven M Smith, a professor of psychology at the Institute of Applied Creativity, Texas A & M University, who says, 'Creative thinking is the norm in human beings and can be observed in almost all mental activities.'<sup>5</sup> Another thinker in this arena, Joy Paul Guildford of the University of Southern California, notes that intelligence doesn't have a direct correlation with a person's cognitive capacity. His research identifies a crucial variable that results in innovative solutions to problem solving: the difference between 'convergent' and 'divergent' thinking (ibid.).

Convergent thinking comprises a more traditional approach to problem solving: the premise is that there is essentially 'one' correct solution to a given problem at hand and success lies in reaching that goal. Divergent thinking, on the other hand, calls for a free and unconstrained thought process that questions norms and challenges pre-existing ideas. Divergent thinking is exemplified by the famous words of Robert Frost (1874–1963):

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

Throughout our childhood and a good part of our teenage and adult years, we are subject to a traditional system of education typically emphasizing convergent thinking. I recall that, as a child, when I was learning the principles of 'modern maths' in school, my mother would sometimes show me a much easier way to solve a problem. However, my teacher did not always accept this different way of subtraction or multiplication, and even if I did get

Whether we are suffering from writer's block or a blank canvas is staring us in the face, whether we are in a lab trying to come up with the latest hand-held computer or just trying to add some fun into a mundane task, we very often have to put on our creative hat—and one size doesn't fit all. Here are some simple tips that can get those juices flowing in the brain. Just watch as the influx of new ideas creates a halo of sparks around your head!



Get away from the problem at hand. Sometimes, sleeping on an issue or taking a walk or distracting yourself completely from the given task can help you refocus with a new mindset; this can very often yield very positive results.



Music truly is the universal language of humankind. Whether it is Bach or Strauss, the strains of Hariprasad Chaurasia's flute or anything else that you can relax to, music can be a very potent catalyst for creative ideas.



Define your problem. Grab a sheet of paper, electronic notebook, computer, or whatever you use to make notes, and define your problem in detail. You'll probably find ideas positively spewing out once you've done this.



Always carry a small notebook and pen or pencil around with you. That way, if you are struck by an idea, you can quickly note it down.

## Developing Creativity

Upon re-reading your notes, you may discover that about ninety per cent of your ideas are daft. Don't worry, that's normal. What's important is the ten per cent that are brilliant.



Read as much as you can about everything possible. Books exercise your brain, provide inspiration, and fill you with information that allows you to make creative connections easily.



Ask questions, seek out sources of knowledge. Exercise your brain by trying something new in your area of endeavour.



Brainstorm. This is an excellent group activity, especially if you are in a team setting. There are various resources that can teach you how to do this effectively. Essentially, you pose a problem for the team and then let ideas flow unhindered from everyone. Not one idea is questioned or turned down so that everyone participates. Common ideas are then categorized into groups, prioritized, and implemented. I have participated in and conducted brainstorming sessions and can confirm that they can make even the quietest person in the room put forth an idea with conviction.

A little bit of effort on our part can help make our work and personal life that much more spontaneous and interesting; and once the creative juices start flowing, enable us to become originators of great ideas and actions.

the correct answer using these other methods, I would lose marks for not following the 'right' steps.

As we proceed along the path of education and then look for a job, we find that emphasis is always placed on the 'what' and not the 'how' of goal achievement. The propensity for convergent thinking becomes increasingly internalized, and since we are, after all, creatures of habit, so is our brain, and with time we gradually begin to lose the ability to 'think out of the box' or question norms; we then take most of our environmental variables as given. We end up confirming the age-old adage, 'If you always think the way you always thought, you will

get what you always got.'

This is the prime premise on which all change-management initiatives are based. Though *change management* is nowadays thought of as a clichéd 'business-school term'—especially when it comes from a typical management graduate like myself—still, change management is something we do every day; it is not the domain of corporations alone. If we analyse the evolution of any social, political, or economic system, we shall find that the only reason it was successful is because it consistently adopted and adapted to change. Mahatma Gandhi rightly says, 'Be the change you want to create in this world.' I

consider Swami Vivekananda to be one of the greatest change agents of all times. He questioned norms, challenged ideas, and accepted the new without prejudice, while using amazing discretion and discrimination in his decision-making process.

Each of us in our fields of endeavour—whether we are working for a corporation, educating students, or creating a place of warmth for our families to come home to every night—can individually and collectively look around us and question inconsistencies in our home, our society, our country. In a typical Indian household, the mother is the one who ensures that everyone has a warm meal, that everyone's needs are met. Can we not ask who takes care of *her* needs? Does anyone ensure that she gets her meal on time, or that she has a glass of milk every day? When we take our environment for granted we cease to be creative, we cease to be true thinkers, we cease to 'live', we merely exist; to my mind, that cannot be the goal of human life.

### **Creativity and Spirituality**


Since I feel ill-equipped to discuss creativity in the context of spirituality, I shall rather draw upon two eloquent statements from Swami Ranganathananda:

The creative act of any creation is preceded by *tapas*. Without *tapas* there is no creativity. When an artist is in *tapas*, then he or she gets creativity. Behind every creative action, there is *tapas*.

Creativity cannot come from the attached state of mind. From a detached state of mind it can come.<sup>6</sup>

Swami Ranganathananda explains that in the Vedantic context, *tapas* means more than just 'physical austerity'; it also implies austerity of speech and mind. A constant sense of alertness and a spirit of discrimination keep the mind from going downhill; each time we check our thoughts to keep our minds at a steady state we are exercising mental *tapas* (190).

Such powerful words, and so beautifully reminiscent of the famous assertion of Thomas Edison: 'Genius is one per cent inspiration and ninety-nine

per cent perspiration.' Yes, creativity cannot come without discipline; creativity truly is the method in the madness, the order in the chaos. These concepts may seem contrary to one another, but it is not so: for a revolutionary idea to flourish, immense discipline and hard work must go on behind the scenes. To allow for productive 'divergent thought' in our minds, it is critical that we be able to converge our thoughts in a focused manner on the issue at hand and use a whole-brain approach to a given problem. And to come up with great answers, it is imperative that we first learn how to ask the right questions. 

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### **Resistance to our Inner Strength**

(1) Mom, you say the more we use our energy, the more it comes, because it is infinite. How is it possible?

(2) It is just like our electricity source. You can draw 150 watts for a mixer or 1000 watts for a toaster from it.

(3) But how can you vary it?

(4) By varying the resistance.

(5) What is the resistance in us?

(6) Our mind is the resistance. The more we reduce the resistance with a positive attitude, the more our inner energy flows.



# MANAGING ANGER

Swami Atmavikasananda

**A**NGER is ubiquitous. We meet anger at home, in the streets, and at our working place. It often causes more harm to ourselves than to others. It is a natural and forceful emotion, with great destructive potential. Anger is also contagious. When people suffer from tension or are going through some conflict, they communicate it to others. They are all the time unhappy and agitated. This produces an atmosphere of unrest and tension around them. They are avoided by people. But if people lead a balanced and calm life, they convey a sense of happiness to all who come in contact with them.



## Shades of Anger

### Legends

- **Durvasa:** Born of the anger of Shiva, he is quick to take offence and reacts with vicious curses. He is also arrogant and thinks little of making Krishna and Rukmini labour for him.
- **Parashurama:** Parashurama's father was killed by King Kartaviryarjuna's men after a dispute over the fabled wish-fulfilling cow, Sushila. To avenge the wrong, Parashurama, though a brahmana, did twenty-one rounds of Bharata, exterminating every single kshatriya he came across. Finally, he had to undertake equally rigorous penance to expiate his wrongs.
- **Hanuman:** He is known as the best among the wise, *jnaninam agragam*. But while setting fire to Lanka he forgot that the fire could also burn down the grove where Sita was confined.

### Lessons

- Durvasa is the image of the 'constitutionally angry' individual.
- Parashurama exemplifies the havoc that 'righteous anger' can wreak.
- Hanuman's action shows how even apparently controlled anger could expose one to grave personal risks.



## The Pathology of Anger

According to the Bhagavadgita, anger is derived from *rajas*, the restlessness in human nature that drives all activity. It is also the result of 'thwarted desire'. It is closely linked to the other baser (demoniac) aspects of human nature: lust, greed, conceit, ostentation, arrogance, jealousy, rudeness, and ignorance. It sequentially leads to delusion, failure of memory, loss of discrimination, and ruinous action.

## Mental Flux

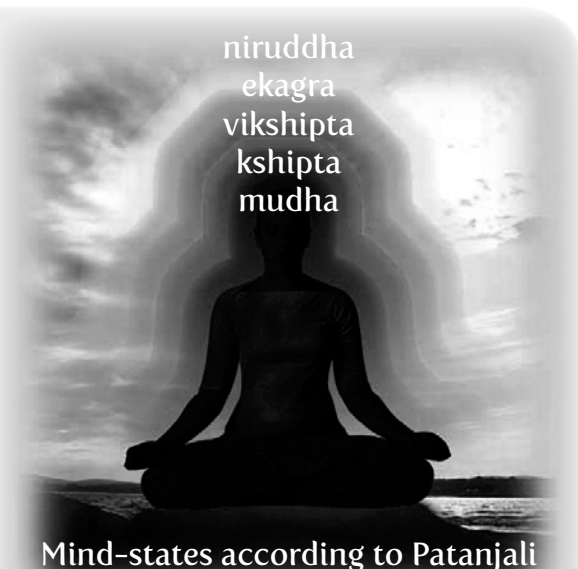
In his commentary on Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, Vyasa speaks of five states of mind: *kshipta*, *mudha*, *vikshipta*, *ekagra*, and *niruddha*.

*Kshipta* is the extremely restless state of mind; it is prone to tension, worry, anger, and conflict.

The mind can also be *mudha*, that is, dull or inert. This is due to a predominance of *tamas*; and such people are also prone to violent bursts of anger.

The *vikshipta* or distracted mind has the capacity to attain concentration off and on, unlike the *kshipta* mind. A mind that is at times calm and at other times disturbed is termed *vikshipta*. Most spiritual seekers have this type of mind. One needs to be especially alert at this stage because of the possibility of concentrating the mind on undesirable objects. Our meditation should transform our life. It is not uncommon to find that after having practised meditation for long hours, anger, restlessness, egotism, suspicion, and such other negative traits become prominent in some people, rather than qualities like calmness of mind, forgiveness, and compassion. These are signs of improper meditation.

The *ekagra* or one-pointed mind is characteristic of people deeply absorbed in their



work. It is a result of sustained discipline, and when this state is coupled with detachment it turns virtually resistant to negative emotions like anger.

The last and final state is *niruddha*—devoid of all mental modification (*vrittis*). It is a super-conscious state, a type of samadhi, and very few people can attain to it.

Most of us swing between stages one and three. Whenever there is anger, tension, or conflict we should know that we have lost the balance of our *vrittis*.

## Swami Vivekananda Compared our Mind to a Lake

So whenever there is a problem, we should know that somebody has thrown a stone into the lake and the ripples have started surfacing.

The bottom of the lake is our true self. These ripples (*vrittis*) are our universe.

*Vrittis* commonly come in the form of thought, emotion, or desire. Anger is also a *vritti*, and it can manifest in gross and subtle forms.





***But somebody may argue that anger has some bright sides too!***

Anger can discipline children.  
Anger can discipline work.

True, but to use anger deliberately for any creative purpose is very difficult unless one knows how to overcome it.

## Evil Effects of Anger

### ***The angry man or woman:***

1. Forgets the lessons in wisdom learnt in life.
2. Loses the ability to discriminate between right and wrong.
3. Loses control over thought and emotions.
4. Becomes overactive, with a highly-charged ego as his or her sole guide.
5. Becomes aggressive in manner.
6. Suffers loss of health—both physical and mental.
7. Destroys friendships and family associations.

When we use anger deliberately as a tool, we should ask questions ourselves the following questions:

1. Are we using anger or is anger using us?
2. Is anger an efficient instrument in our hands or are we a mere tool in the hands of our anger?

Using anger is like playing with fire.

## Three Ways of Looking at Anger

1. Your anger at somebody.
2. Somebody's anger at you.
3. Anger without a focus.

### ***When you tend to get angry with others:***

1. Knowing that anger is bad, you should get angry with anger itself.
2. Know that by getting angry, you are forming a habit too.
3. The greatest remedy for anger is delay. Just try counting from one to twenty (or fifty or one hundred!) the next time you are angry.
4. Try deep breathing. This is known to induce relaxation.
5. Try to find out the reason why you are angry. Often, when things have cooled down, the reason appears trivial. The real reason for our anger may not be immediately evident, but may be lurking below in our subconscious minds.
6. Think a loving thought. Love is the opposite of anger. (A mother is very angry with

somebody. Just then her child comes running into her lap and hugs her. Her anger is replaced by love, in spite of herself!)

### ***When somebody is angry with you:***

1. Introspect before acting. Why is he angry with me? 'Maybe he is just unwell and so is irritable.'

'There is another class of *vrittis* called *vikalpa* [verbal delusion]. A word is uttered and we do not wait to consider its meaning; we jump to conclusions immediately' (Swami Vivekananda). If we can consciously reduce such verbal delusions in our communications, misunderstandings and unpleasantness will be considerably reduced. Next time someone calls you a 'nut', just think over what he means—why he used this term, and if it really says something about you—before you lash out.

2. If you are wrong, accept it. That will solve the problem and may even win you a friend.

3. Be optimistic; 'It may be for my good.'  
4. Remember: 'When the shoe bites, one does not bite the shoe.'

5. Be thankful. By getting angry with us, people often reveal our faults to us. And for rendering this service they even sacrifice their own peace of mind!

### **Angry for no good reason?**

Some people tend to get angry more easily than

others for no apparent reason. The reason could lie in:

1. Low frustration tolerance.
2. Being part of a dysfunctional family.
3. Physical factors: illness, heat, or overcrowding.
4. Unidentified psychological problems like lack of assertiveness, bereavement, or depression.
5. Frequent ill luck or perceived injustice.

## **Developing a Calm Personality**

We cannot avoid anger completely, so to minimize its impact, we can use some practical measures:

1. Cultivate the practice of meditation, breath awareness, deep breathing, and yoga.
2. Make it a habit to sit quietly at home, alone, at the beginning of your day. Think about the work at hand and the situations you are likely to face. This will prepare you for anticipating and facing even explosive situations with friendliness and calm.
3. Surround yourself with watchfulness so that anger does not catch you unawares.
4. 'Humility works as an antidote to anger for all, everywhere, and at all times.'
5. Develop a sense of humour and try to see

the lighter side of things.

6. Hear more; speak less and to the point.
7. Do not add fuel to your anger. Neutralize resentment by diverting your mind from such thoughts as 'I will teach him a lesson'.
8. Give up fault-finding.
9. Develop consideration for others. Try to understand why people think, speak, and behave the way they do.
10. Don't jump to conclusions.
11. In times of peace, consciously fill your inner being with sweetness, tranquillity, and mildness. Pray regularly for peace and the good of humanity. Think some good and pleasing thoughts before starting work.

*When you tend to get angry with others, you should address your mind and say, 'Mind, if you must be angry with those who cause you harm, why don't you then get angry with anger itself?' For it does you the greatest harm; it prevent you from attaining the cherished values of life, righteousness, wealth, pleasure, and liberation. While angry you live through hell, even before your death. So, you have no enemy worse than anger.*

—Swami Vidyaranaya

## **Universal Prayers**

Om. May there be peace in heaven. May there be peace in the sky. May there be peace on earth. May there be peace in water. May there be peace in the plants. May there be peace in the trees. May there be peace in the gods. May there be peace in Brahman. May there be peace in all. May that peace, real peace, be mine.

May all be freed from dangers. May all realize what is good. May all be actuated by noble thoughts. May all rejoice everywhere.

Om shantih, shantih, shantih!

Peace, peace, peace!







# ***Time Management: First Things First***

**Swami Sarvapriyananda**

**L**IFE is picking up speed—this is a basic truth apparent to all. Village life gives way to city life, the industrial age gives way to the information age, mass transit by road and rail is replaced by mass air travel, letter-writing succumbs to e-mail and cellphones. The common feature in each of these transformations is an acceleration of life. As life picks up pace, we are often frustrated at our apparent inability to find time for all the things that we would like to accomplish. We look to management experts for time management theories, techniques, and tools which can help us to better organize, allocate, and utilize the time at our disposal.

There is a deeper issue involved here. Time management is relevant not just to how we spend our office hours or our weekdays. Its compass is our whole lifetime. How we live—what we do, say, and think—determines our satisfaction, or lack thereof, with life. And it is not generally recognized that how we live largely depends on what we do with the time given to us. Time management, in fact, is not just a management tool to help improve the effectiveness of business executives. It has a direct bearing on the ultimate objectives of human existence—on the meaning, goals, and achievements of life.

## ***The Most Important Resource***

Look at time as a resource and you will notice three remarkable characteristics. First, everything requires time. Whatever you do or say or think, requires time. It is, in this sense, the universal resource. Second, time is irreplaceable—that is, it has no substitute. Most economic resources have some substitutes, some more than others. For example, you can easily substitute margarine for butter, machines for labour, artificial products for natural sub-

stances, and so on. But there is no substitute for time. Third, the supply of time is truly limited. No matter how great the demand for time, the supply will not increase. Yesterday's supply was twenty-four hours and those twenty-four hours are gone forever. 'Time waste differs from material waste in that there can be no salvage' (Henry Ford). You cannot manufacture, mine, or harvest time. In the language of economics, the supply of time is completely inelastic.

If you just sit and watch the clock, time will pass, just as it passes for the busiest person alive. There is nothing you can do about time—what you can change is what you do. This idea is at the heart of time management. Time management is not about time per se—it is about our lives, what we do with the time given to us.

There is one very important resource that you share with Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein, and Bill Gates, and indeed everybody else who is or has been noble, powerful, learned, saintly, rich, or whatever else you consider worthy of being. They all had twenty-four hours in a day, each day they lived—and so do you. All the difference lies in what is done with those twenty-four hours; a truism no doubt, but one worth considering. Only those who make poor use of their time complain of lack of time.

## ***Managing One's Time***

So time is our most important resource. Yet we are hardly aware of it until we run out of it. Why are we so poor at time management? Peter Drucker suggests that the weakness lies in our inbuilt 'biological clock'. Though humans, like many animals, have an inbuilt sense of time, this inner clock is easily thrown off-track by things like jet lag, illness, lack

of sleep, boredom, and other such causes.

Very little attention is paid to the effective use of this most valuable resource. Think of how much care you take of your monetary resources—checking what your bank balance is, foreseeing possible expenditures and sources of income, and making important investment decisions. How much effort do you put into managing your time?

Benjamin Franklin wrote much on the subject of managing time. ‘Dost thou love life?’ he asked, ‘Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.’ He wrote, ‘If you want to enjoy one of the greatest luxuries in life, the luxury of having enough time, time to rest, time to think things through, time to get things done and know you have done them to the best of your ability, remember there is only one way. Take enough time to think and plan things in the order of their importance. Your life will take on a new zest, you will add years to your life and more life to your years. Let all your things have their places.’ Modern time management experts couldn’t have put it better.

People generally have the idea that time management is for corporate executives, for MBAs, and so on. That is far from the truth. The principles of time management, though they were primarily formulated in a business context, are applicable to all—students, teachers, housewives, everybody. In fact, working women are among the busiest persons on the planet—always under pressure trying to manage both family and career. They can really benefit from knowledge of the principles of time management.

The vast variety of time management theories, tools and techniques can be bewildering. The underlying principles, however, are actually very simple. Reduce the amount of work you do, do your work more effectively, and do the right things—these three principles guide just about any time management project.

#### **Four Generations of Time Management**

Stephen Covey, in his best-selling *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, speaks of four genera-

tions of time management theory. The first-generation thought regarding time management was very rudimentary—a notebook or even a piece of paper wherein you simply made a list of things to do and crossed the items off one by one. All of us use this device to some extent.

But ‘to do’ lists give no sense of priority. The first generation did not feature planning and prioritization. The jobs just come up one by one, and you keep doing them. The second and third generations were great improvements over first-generation time management theory. Schedules, diaries, appointment books—all these came up. The concept of priority and long-term planning was introduced. Yet even this has serious limitations. It does not take into account human goals and values—humans are reduced to machines trying to stick to a routine. Another problem is that once you make a plan—‘This is how I will spend my day’—any deviation brings frustration and guilt (‘I am not following my routine’, and such other thoughts).

Covey gives us the concept of fourth-generation time management—what he calls ‘Quadrant II time management’. Look at the following matrix:

#### **The Time Management Matrix<sup>1</sup>**

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	<b>Quadrant I</b> Crises, emergencies	<b>Quadrant II</b> Self-development, relationships, health
NOT IMPORTANT	<b>Quadrant III</b> Some meetings, some phone calls, proximate pressing matters	<b>Quadrant IV</b> Time wasters, gossiping, trivia, some phone calls

The time management matrix is based upon the important principle 'Put first things first'. We are all quite aware of this common-sense cliché, but we often fail to focus on the question 'What are the first things in my life?' As Thoreau said, 'It is not enough to be busy. The question is: What are we busy about?' The value of this matrix will become apparent when we consider this question. This matrix will show that most of us make a natural but fatal mistake in our choice of 'first things': we confuse urgency with importance.

Look at Quadrant I: things which are urgent as well as important. Your friend gets a heart attack—what do you do? Obviously, you drop all other activities and rush him to the hospital. That is a crisis—very urgent and very important. Or, you have an all-important project deadline coming up and you have to deliver results to retain your job. Again, this is urgent and important too.

But there are activities which are urgent yet unimportant. The phone is ringing—your first impulse is to pick it up. It is proximate, right there in front of you, demanding attention. So you pick it up and talk. Yet how many phone calls are truly important? Don't we all know how it feels to be ignored while the person across the desk talks away on the phone? That is an urgent but unimportant activity—Quadrant III. Many of our daily activities fall into this category.

And then some people waste time doing things neither urgent nor important. Hours and hours of gossiping, internet-browsing, playing video games, or reading tabloids—all these belong to the fourth quadrant.

Now look at the second quadrant: you find activities which are important but not urgent. Take exercise, for example—you feel you should do some yoga every day; that would be very good for your health. Yet days, months, and years pass—no yoga! You feel you should spend more time with your spouse or children—yet you do not. You want to study further—a PhD degree maybe. But years pass, even decades—no PhD. Why does this happen to us? The answer is in Quadrant II: important but

not urgent. These are activities which will directly contribute to the realization of our life's goals, and yet, are usually neglected. Prayer and meditation, exercise, studies, relationships—all these are important, yet they do not press for our attention right away. Exercise is important—in the long run—not right now, not like that beeping cellphone ...

Activities belonging to Quadrants I, III, and IV consume our time and attention, leaving little time for Quadrant II activities. The only way you will get time and energy for doing the important and fulfilling Quadrant II activities is by reducing the time spent in other quadrants. The crises in Quadrant I have to be faced at once; hence you cannot reduce the time spent on them immediately. You have to look to Quadrants III and IV and try to extract the time sucked into activities which are only apparently useful or those which are plainly useless. The first step is to ruthlessly prune all unnecessary activities. Second, for activities which have to be done anyway, see if delegation helps. Often, we take on jobs which others are supposed to do, to the detriment of the work that is really ours. The third step is to ensure that these jobs are done right the first time; that is, you should not have to keep coming back to the same item again and again.

It is also important to prune Quadrant III activities. Here it pays to take a look at what role technology is playing in your life. Do cellphones and e-mail save time or eat into your time? People are often surprised when they actually consider the amount of time spent on their cellphone or on the Internet. Technology has no doubt enhanced our productivity, but its avatars, the cellphone and the Internet, are very intrusive and time-expensive. You could decide to have 'no cellphone, no Internet' hours of the day when you will concentrate on specific Quadrant II tasks.

Again, it pays to take an objective look at the role of Quadrant IV activities in your life—the petty and trivial time-wasters. Ask yourself, 'What will happen if I do not do this?' If the answer is 'Nothing!' then the obvious thing to do is to stop doing that activity. Thus you free time and energy

for the all-important Quadrant II.

Covey also points out an interesting additional benefit of increasing Quadrant II time at the expense of Quadrants III and IV: the crises-laden Quadrant I also shrinks over time. For example, if you exercise regularly (Quadrant II) you are significantly less likely to have a health crisis (Quadrant I). If you consciously allocate time for your projects, then the Quadrant I deadline will not loom quite so threateningly!

### On Multitasking

Our increasingly busy lives have forced us to rely on multitasking—a fancy name for doing many things at the same time. However, in this age of iPods and Blackberries, laptops and palmtops, twenty-four by seven and ‘quality-time’, the old adage—‘one thing at a time’—still holds good. Most of us find ‘multitasking’—doing one thing well—difficult enough, let alone ‘multitasking’! Although human beings are multi-talented and capable of an amazing range of activities, all great achievements are achieved by the concentration of energy and time on one objective after another, rather than by doing several things at once. Some people are, no doubt, capable of genuine multitasking—Mozart, it seems, used to work on multiple compositions at the same time, and all would turn out to be masterpieces! In India, we have the concept of *ashtavadhana*, attending to eight things all at once, flawlessly. However, our busy executives and housewives would be well advised not to try being Mozarts of the office or practise *ashtavadhana* in the kitchen!

Doing one thing at a time actually increases speed. The more you concentrate time and energy on a single task, the more tasks you can accomplish. The quality of work also goes up.

Strangely, those who just can’t get things done often work much harder and longer than those who can. This phenomenon can be attributed to three causes: (i) misjudg-

ing the time required for a task, (ii) hurrying to complete the task, and (iii) doing several things at once, or multitasking. We all learn through experience that things always take more time than expected to get done. Drucker writes, ‘If there is any one “secret” of effectiveness, it is concentration. Effective executives know they have to get many things done—and done effectively. Therefore, they concentrate—their own time and energy, as well as that of their organization—on doing one thing at a time, and on doing first things first.’

### In Conclusion

The luminaries of the spiritual world—Buddha, Christ, Shankara, Ramakrishna, and others—are excellent exemplars for this fourth-generation theory of time management. They decided that only one thing was important in their lives—the ultimate Truth: Nirvana, God, Brahman, or Kali—and poured out their whole lives into realizing and manifesting that alone. But if you look at Sri Ramakrishna’s life through the prism of conventional, third-generation time management thinking, that is, following a routine, maintaining schedules, and so on, you will find very poor time management indeed! Great scientists and artists are good time managers by the fourth-generation theory but, significantly, not according to the third-generation theory. Fourth-generation thinking is thus a significant advance over the third generation.

There exists a huge variety of time management tools and techniques. But what we have discussed above are the core principles of time management. The secret of time management lies in self-management. Do things which are important, not those which only seem to be so. Do not mistake urgency for importance—there lies the morass of frustration. Putting ‘first things first’ has always been good advice; only now we see a little more clearly why it is so important to success and satisfaction in life.



### Reference

1. See Stephen R Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (London: Pocket Books, 2004), 151.



# Understanding Leadership

Dr Vinayak Rao

**W**HEN we think about leadership, a range of thoughts crosses our mind: the leader as a 'hero' or a 'great man' who accomplishes a major goal against all odds for his or her followers, or a leader as a rare and 'charismatic' individual with extraordinary qualities and a grand vision.<sup>1</sup> In fact, according to some scholars, the history of the world is the history of great men. The great-man theory of leadership continues to be of popular interest to showcase individual leadership in the political and corporate world.

While there have been many studies on leadership, the dimensions and definition of the concept remain unclear. To treat leadership as a separate concept, it must be distinguished from other social-influence phenomena. The key to concise conceptualization of effective leadership is elusive; even definitions of leadership exhibit little convergence.

## Types of Leadership

We all recognize that some of the greatest leaders known to humanity have been the founders of various religions. Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and the Prophet Muhammad are paragons of *religious leadership*. On the other hand, Alexander the Great, Chenghiz Khan, and Napoleon Bonaparte, for instance, exemplify *military leadership*.

According to one sociologist, leadership is common to all the different stages of the social process, from its simplest and most primitive to its most complex and highly developed manifestations, and he defines leadership as the pre-eminence of one or a few individuals in a group in the process of



control of societal phenomena. In some societies, it is supposed that a leader can or should emerge from only a certain section of the society or even particular families. Not surprisingly, when we look at the vast number of studies on leadership, we find that most of the early literature focused on the question: *Are leaders born or made?* This school of thought originated with an influential study of the hereditary background of great men and a later study that advanced the notion that the survival of the fittest and intermarriage among them produces an aristocratic class that differs biologically from the lower classes.<sup>2</sup>

The advent of the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity made popular by the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century led to a gradual decline of such old-fashioned views of *dynastic* or *hereditary leadership* during the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In the twentieth century, the world witnessed a radically different form of leadership, which emerged from mobilizing followers on the basis of an ideology or a philosophy which articulated a

grand vision of freedom from exploitation of man by man and freedom from colonial rule for vast sections of humankind. The *political leadership* of Lenin in Russia, Mahatma Gandhi in India, Chairman Mao in China, Martin Luther King in the United States of America, Julius Nyerere in Tanzania, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana, Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, and Nelson Mandela in South Africa are cases in point.<sup>3</sup>

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, international concern about the environmental consequences of economic development undertaken since the time of the Industrial Revolution found its expression in the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972. The ecological consequences of the various pathways of development being pursued against the backdrop of a burgeoning world population and the depletion of the earth's resources emerged as an issue of pressing global concern. The idea that economic development has to cater not merely to the needs of the present generation but future generations as well without compromising their ability to utilize nature's resources ushered in the new concept of sustainable development and *environmental leadership*.

The twentieth century will be remembered for the birth of several new nations and the rapid spread of universal suffrage, democracy, education, women's rights (including reproductive rights), transport and communications, mass media, medicine and health, science, technology, and economic development. The unprecedented pace of development and dissemination of information and communication technologies has led to a situation where some have access to new technologies but many are without any such access. What kind of *technological leadership* is required to bridge this digital divide?

Stem-cell research, gene splicing, and cloning have provoked concerns from various sections of society on ethical and religious grounds. The epidemic proportions of global public health issues such as AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria is a huge

challenge to the *scientific leadership* of the international community.

What kind of *civil society leadership* is required when public trust in governments is on a continuous decline? Is there a role for *corporate leadership* in ensuring that ever increasing amounts of wealth generated in the market contribute not only to shareholder value but also to alleviating poverty?

What are the challenges confronting *educational leadership* in creating appropriate human-resource capacity to meet the needs of a knowledge economy at national and international levels? How far have we encouraged *women's leadership* in our societies and with what results?

### Exercising Leadership

A central theme of the literature on leadership has been the role of leadership vision, which involves (i) the envisioning of an 'image of a desired future', which (ii) when effectively articulated and communicated to followers, serves (iii) to empower those followers so that they can enact the vision. In other words, there is something uniquely 'human' and strikingly 'empowering' about leadership, and it comes with an onerous responsibility.

An eminent writer on the subject defines leadership as 'inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations—of both leaders and followers. And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations.'<sup>4</sup>

But the more we look at the vast amount of literature in this emerging discipline over the last forty years or so, the less we notice the emphasis on the 'human dimensions' of leadership.

In an attempt to study the observable and measurable aspects of leadership behaviour—a trend borrowed from the research methods of varied disciplines that actually contribute to our understanding of leadership—it appears that 'we lost sight of the "deep structure", or meaning of leadership'. It has been argued very cogently that 'existing re-

search has mapped only a portion of the domain of leadership phenomena due to a concentration on relatively few leadership constructs and because of the popularity of a limited set of empirical methodologies.<sup>3</sup>

The various themes of leadership cited above apply to the larger context of leadership and human dimensions of leadership.

### **The Context of Leadership**

An understanding of the context in which a problem is situated is important for exercising leadership in a meaningful and productive manner. Understanding this context is also important because it shapes leadership—consciously or otherwise—more than any other factor. A prescription about what leadership skills are required and what leadership styles are possible can only emerge from a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the context of leadership.

Leadership studies have not fully recognized the role of context in leadership, much less theorized about the same. James Rosenau analyses the role of context and the constraints on leadership in a recent work.<sup>5</sup> The formal and informal requirements of leadership, the dynamic nature of followership, and a critical look at what constitutes charisma in the broader sense as highlighted in his work helps us unravel the multi-dimensional nature of leadership.

It is perhaps desirable to examine the context of leadership from two perspectives—one, that is eloquently presented in Rosenau's paper, which emphasizes factors that 'constrain their (leaders') policies and limit their conduct', and two, what I attempt here. Inasmuch as we are talking about leaders or leadership, what is the larger context that determines all leadership action? Is it the national/international system (structures) or the forces that are driving and shaping that national/international system (processes)? Is it possible to identify an all encompassing element(s) that best describes the context in which we find ourselves today?

I argue that globalization and diversity are two

core all-encompassing elements that provide an overarching context in which leadership is exercised at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It follows then that *leadership is all about managing globalization and diversity* for the benefit of all. Leadership is the art of adapting to the many challenges emerging from such a context with appropriate skills, strategies, and sensitivity.

### **(i) Globalization**

Simply put, the context in which leadership is exercised today is largely defined by globalization and the forces unleashed in response to it. A striking feature of the process of globalization is that it creates, at any given point of time, winners and losers. Some sections of the society are lagging behind and some are left out. Surely, this has been a fact of history. What makes it an inescapable component of the context in which leadership today operates is the pervasive influence of democracy, human-rights watchdogs, and the media. Leaders have to face this challenge of coping with increasing complexity.

The forces unleashed in response to the process of globalization are all a part of the diversity that characterizes our humanity. I am referring to diversity in all its manifestations—cultural, religious, linguistic, ethnic, national, gender, class, professional, ideological, and so on. Some of these forces are passive and some very active, some apparently are very conflictual and some very combative. These forces appear in all walks of life: markets, the world of ideas, culture, ecology, social groups like women, youth, indigenous peoples, sub-national groups, NGOs, and terrorist groups.

### **(ii) Diversity**

All through history and even today, when we examine the news and events around us that depict intolerance, violence, conflicts, war, terrorism, refugees, human-rights violations, genocide, and so on, we realize that the root cause of it all is our inability, even our failure, to manage diversity. There surely are any number of instances when we do in fact celebrate our diversity. But at times, when one group is

pitted against another or when a group perceives itself as the loser vis-à-vis another, with the attendant sense of relative deprivation or marginalization or exclusion, we have the ingredients to trigger unrest, tension, conflicts, and human tragedies.

In the light of the above, it is clear that the management or mismanagement of diversity by leaders has profound consequences. The leadership that looks at diversity as a constraining environment is sometimes prone to be either confrontational or aggressive. It can lead to an emergence of 'leadership based on fear and force'—a fear that you are likely to lose all that you have if you do not fight the 'other'. When fear determines the leadership style, we can only imagine the consequences. As an extreme example, we can surely locate the current war on terror as posing a huge challenge to managing diversity at all levels. Regrettably, some of the analytical prescriptions offered by influential writers such as Robert Kaplan and Caleb Carr to win the war on terror diminish the importance of international law and international organizations, elevate military means, and are even destructive of democratic governance.<sup>6</sup>

### **Changing Functions of Leadership**

A leadership that understands the need to manage diversity is deeply engaged in delivering effective but 'routine and transactional' leadership. The art of aggregating multiple interests and also crafting a balance therein is seen as a function of *transactional leadership*. Transactional leaders 'approach followers with an eye to exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes or subsidies for campaign contributions. Such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers, especially in groups, legislatures, and parties.' In other words, transactional leadership is characterized by its central focus on provision of material rewards to followers in return for their committed effort.

The task of organizing our society and improving the quality of life for all depends on effective leadership and governance. The larger context of globalization and diversity should be seen there-

fore as inviting the leadership of the day to view this context not as a constraining space but as one expanding the functions of leadership. This requires leaders with new attitudes and skills.

The art of managing globalization and diversity at a systemic level to design and build an equitable society therein, is seen as a function of *transformational leadership*.<sup>7</sup> Transformational leadership is defined as the process of pursuing collective goals through the mutual tapping of leaders' and followers' motive bases toward the achievement of the intended change. Transformational leaders differ from transactional leaders in the sense that they are willing to change the framework in which they operate by engaging the followers more actively; 'that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents'. In the corporate world, the idea that winning companies build leaders at every level has taken firm root.<sup>8</sup>

The task of dealing with diversity or multi-cultural and multi-sectoral groups; sharing of governance at the national level among public, private, and independent sectors; and developing a positive equation with international organizations are, in my opinion, the most important characteristics of this new context; this calls for leaders and leadership that is markedly different from the 'routine and transactional' types.

The challenge today is to identify, train, and encourage 'systemic and transformational' leadership. Such leaders exhibit three qualities that encompass the *human dimensions of leadership*: (i) a systems approach and systems thinking in understanding and solving problems; (ii) a high level of emotional intelligence including compassion, sensitivity, and listening skills; and (iii) an innate ability to transform situations and relationships from competitive and conflictual to consensual and cooperative frameworks.

This is not to say that at every major level and in every major domain of society we are seeking 'systemic and transformational leaders'. What we surely need at every major level and in every major domain of society is a leadership that understands



the systemic and transformational context in which it is operating at the dawn of this century. And that systemic and transformational context is defined by globalization and diversity.

### Leadership and Followership

Leadership is a two-way street. Rosenau, in his work cited above, states a very important and valid principle: Creative leadership requires a voluntary followership. It very much flows from the existing scheme of things that 'extensive expectations' will continue to dominate any followership and its interaction with leadership in an era of globalization. This is in line with human nature and its expectations from leaders in times of profound change and/or chaos or in times of flux as embodied in globalization.

In my opinion, in such a context, followership will likely be different. I envisage a kind of *fragmented followership*—not necessarily bad or negative—due to the multiple loyalties of citizenry/followership. The multiple primordial as well as modern loyalties of an individual are not only a feature of our societies but also a big contributor to their robust development. We can surely cite loyalties of individuals in the realm of, say, religion, political ideology, environmental protection, bioethics, language, ethnicity, solidarity (with the poor and the disenfranchised), nation-state (my country, right or wrong), world government, and universal principles of human rights, to name a few. Fragmented followership can be seen either as a limiting factor on leadership or as an opportunity to adapt appropriately to such a context.

In conclusion, any limitation, if so perceived, is in my view a function of the menu of choices that is available to a leader. Those leaders who master the contradictory forces of globalization at the systemic level and deliver results at regional or local levels will have greater followership. In the past two decades, nations have seen great leaders who understood the dynamics of globalization and diversity and have tried to adjust with this process for the moment. What we now need is the emergence

of master-statesmen and -stateswomen at the political level, and even thought leaders to enunciate the much needed vision about managing globalization and diversity. And in this age of rapid dissemination of new media technologies, such leaders will have enormous power, influence, and authority, and even the moral and soft power that could perhaps equal the founders of various religions in the past.



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# Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda

Mrs Alice M Hansbrough

(Continued from the previous issue)

‘**D**ID you ever see Swamiji in any especially exalted mood?’

‘No, not particularly, though sometimes when he had talked for some time, the air would become surcharged with a spiritual atmosphere. There was one occasion in particular: we had gone to the hill near our home where we used to have the picnics. Swamiji became absorbed in some subject he was discussing, and he talked for *six hours* without interruption—from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon! The air was just vibrant with spirituality by the time it was over.

‘At another time in Alameda, I was upset or depressed about something, and he said to me, “Come, sit down and we will meditate.” “Oh, I never meditate, Swami,” I told him. “Well, come and sit by me, and I will meditate,” he replied. So I sat down and closed my eyes. In a moment I felt as though I were going to float away, and I quickly opened my eyes to look at Swamiji. He had the appearance of a statue, as though there were not a spark of life in his body. He must have meditated for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then opened his eyes again.’

‘Do you think that when Swamiji came to San Francisco he felt as free as he did in your home?’

‘Not while he was in the Home of Truth. This was natural, for quite a number of people were living there and he could not feel as free or at home as he had in our house. After some time there he told me one day, “I must get out of here.” It was then that Mrs Aspinall and I took the apartment on Turk Street, and Swamiji came.

‘But if he found it difficult to live in the Home of Truth, imagine his having a spiritualist for a travelling companion.’

‘What do you mean?’ Swami Ashokananda asked.

‘Didn’t you know that he travelled with a spiritualist when he was on a lecture tour through the Eastern States?’

‘No!’

‘Oh yes. While he was under contract to that lecture bureau during his first visit to the West, he travelled with a very well-known spiritualist named Colville, who apparently was also under contract to the same bureau. Swamiji used to say, “If you think X is hard to live with, you should have travelled with Colville.” The man seems to have had a nurse to look after him all the time.’

‘Did you find Swamiji at all abstracted and apparently not much interested in his activities toward the end of his stay?’ Swami Ashokananda asked.

‘No indeed,’ Mrs Hansbrough replied. ‘Probably you are thinking of that mood which later came over him, when in India he was asked by some of the monks about something and he told them they would have to decide it, that his work was done.

‘This was never apparent here, nor even in June of that year when he wrote me from New York City. No, he took the greatest interest in people and in “the Movement”, and in whom he would send to carry on after he left the Pacific Coast. I am sure that if his health had permitted, he would have come to the West a third time.

‘Swami Abhedananda was having trouble with the Leggetts in New York during the period when Swamiji was staying with us in Los Angeles. Mr Leggett expected to run the Society there in his capacity as president and expected Swami Abhedananda to acquiesce in this. One day Swamiji remarked

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about this situation. "You people think the head of a society can run things," he said. "You know, my boys can't work under those conditions."

The conversation had now lasted well over an hour and it was almost two o'clock. The Swami therefore directed that Mrs Hansbrough be driven home, and from there he returned to the Temple.

***Sunday, March 30, 1941***

On Sunday, March 30, 1941, Mrs Hansbrough was again invited by Swami Ashokananda to drive home with him after his morning lecture in the Century Club Building. The day, however, was windy and rainy, and the drive was therefore a short one.

There was some conversation about the attendance at the swami's lecture that morning, and this led the swami to ask if Swami Vivekananda's lectures in San Francisco were well attended.

'His Sunday morning audience usually ran from five to six hundred people,' Mrs Hansbrough said. 'At evening lectures there were not so many, but usually he did not lecture in the evening on Sunday.'

'And classes?' the swami asked.

'Class attendance averaged from one hundred fifty to two hundred—which was not bad, considering that there was a charge of fifty cents for each class. That is, the charge was a dollar and a half for a series of three. The lectures were free. We followed the custom of the day.

'If I were to have the work to do over again with my present perspective, I would do it much differently,' Mrs Hansbrough went on. 'I would get the Academy of Science to sponsor the first lecture, and

have it free. If we had done this, it would have given Swamiji at the start a group of intellectual people, and then he could have chosen from there on what he wanted to do. As it was, Miss MacLeod was very determined in the view that his first lecture should be charged for. Swamiji usually let us decide these things as he was unfamiliar with the country. I did not have the temerity and outspokenness that I have now, or I would have ridiculed Miss MacLeod into agreeing that it should be a free first lecture. As it was, we charged a dollar admission.'

'Once after we had moved to the Turk Street flat a woman said something to Swamiji about his teaching religion. He looked at her and replied: "Madam, I am not teaching religion. I am selling my brain for money to help my people. If you get some benefit from it, that is good; but I am not teaching religion!"'

'Where do you think Swamiji showed the greater power in his lectures, here or in Los Angeles?' Swami Ashokananda asked.

'I think he showed greater power here,' Mrs Hansbrough replied. 'He seemed to get greater satisfaction from his work here.'

'Swamiji said many seemingly contradictory things. For example, he said of his lectures and work, "I have been saying these things before, over and over again." In the Turk Street flat one day he said, "There is no Vivekananda", and again, "Do not ask these questions while you have this maya mixed up with your understanding."

'Did he ever express any opinion about San Francisco?'

'No, not that I remember. He seemed to be like a bird in flight: he would stop here, then there, with no great concern for liking or disliking the places where he stopped.'

'Now, what instructions did Swamiji give you before you came to San Francisco from Los Angeles?'

'Well, I gave him the instructions,' Mrs Hansbrough said with a smile. 'I told him to give me a week and then to come on, and that I would get a place for him to stay so he would not have to be in

a hotel. I got in touch with all my old friends and acquaintances, mostly those who were interested in so-called “new thought”, and found nearly all of them readily agreeable to helping arrange plans for Swamiji’s lectures. Later I found that their motives were largely to publicize themselves through publicizing Swamiji, though it did not occur to me then because I was so absorbed in working for him. I arranged for him to stay at the Home of Truth centre at 1231 Pine Street. (The building is still standing today, though it is no longer the Home of Truth.) They were delighted to have him, and provided him, free of charge, with a room and his board. You see, the Home of Truth centres were supported by public subscriptions: the idea was started by Emma Curtis Hopkins, who branched off from Mary Baker Eddy and Christian Science.’

‘And did you make arrangements for the lectures and classes?’

‘Yes, I selected a hall—Washington Hall it was—for the first Sunday morning lecture, and another smaller hall across Post Street for the classes. I had come north about the middle of February, and this first lecture of Swamiji’s was near the end of the month. The attendance was very disappointing from the standpoint of numbers: there were probably less than one hundred and fifty. [Swamiji’s first lecture was held at Golden Gate Hall, San Francisco, on Friday evening, February 23, 1900. The subject: The Ideal of a Universal Religion.]

‘I remember that Swamiji was seated down in the front row in the audience before the lecture began, and when I went to sit by him, he

made a sign to ask how many I thought there were. When I estimated one hundred and fifty, he wrote in the palm of one hand with his finger 100 as his estimate. He did not say anything, but he seemed disappointed. If we had had the first lecture free I am sure we would have had a better attendance. As it was, we charged a dollar per person.’

‘Oh my!’ Swami Ashokananda exclaimed. ‘And one hundred came at a dollar each? Well, that shows that there was real interest.’

‘How did Swamiji come from Los Angeles? Did he come alone?’

‘Yes, he came alone, by train. It must have been the day train, because I remember that we met him at the Oakland Mole, came across on the ferry, and had dinner at the Home of Truth.’

‘And how was he dressed when he arrived?’

‘He had on that black loose-fitting suit which he usually wore, and the black silk turban.’

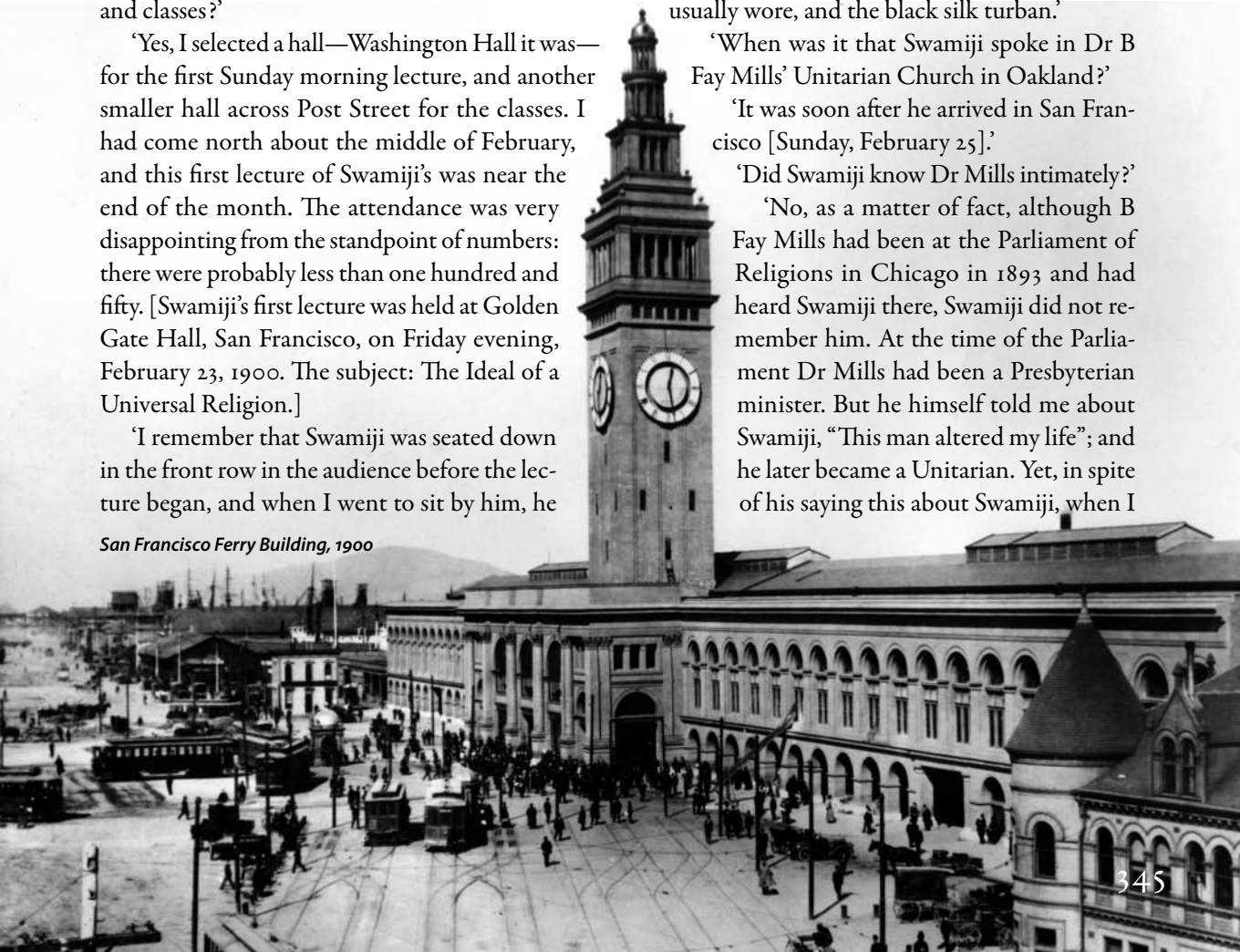
‘When was it that Swamiji spoke in Dr B Fay Mills’ Unitarian Church in Oakland?’

‘It was soon after he arrived in San Francisco [Sunday, February 25].’

‘Did Swamiji know Dr Mills intimately?’

‘No, as a matter of fact, although B Fay Mills had been at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 and had heard Swamiji there, Swamiji did not remember him. At the time of the Parliament Dr Mills had been a Presbyterian minister. But he himself told me about Swamiji, “This man altered my life”; and he later became a Unitarian. Yet, in spite of his saying this about Swamiji, when I

San Francisco Ferry Building, 1900





**Rev. B Fay Mills**

went to see him while he was lecturing in Metropolitan Temple to ask if he would announce a course of lectures by Swami Vivekananda, he refused! And he had wanted to manage Swamiji's whole visit in San Francisco; he had written Swamiji and asked to do so. This

was after Swamiji's first lecture, and we felt that if he could obtain some announcements of this type it would help increase the attendance. I did not have the temerity then that I have now, or I would have told Dr Mills plainly what I thought of him!

'He was an astute man of business. His plan for introducing Swamiji in San Francisco had been to have him speak first outside of San Francisco—that is, in his own church in Oakland. Then he would advertise here that "many hundreds had been turned away"—which we used to do quite truthfully in Los Angeles—in first introducing him here. He did this when he advertised the lecture Swamiji did give at his church, and with good effect.

'I never could figure why Swamiji was unwilling to allow B Fay Mills to handle his arrangements here unless it was because of the trouble he had had [in 1894] with the lecture bureau and others seeking to gain a commission from whatever income he realized from his lectures and classes.'

'Was Swamiji comfortable in the Home of Truth in San Francisco?' Swami Ashokananda asked.

'No, he wasn't,' Mrs Hansbrough replied. 'So I took him to the home of a friend of mine. He

was not comfortable there either; and it was then that Mrs Aspinall—she and her husband were heads of the Home of Truth on Pine Street—said, "See here, we must find a place where this man can be comfortable." So she and I took the flat then on Turk Street, and she explained to her husband that it was in order to

make a comfortable place for Swamiji to stay. It was a poor sort of place, but the best we could do for the money we could afford to spend. When I told Swamiji this, he said, "That is because I am a sannyasin and can't get anything good."

'Mr Aspinall did not like the idea of Mrs Aspinall's leaving the Pine Street Home of Truth to set up the Turk Street flat with me so that Swamiji could have a quiet place to stay. At the time he objected strongly to it, but Mrs Aspinall told him, "Benjamin, you know that we do not have any truth; we just talk." She meant that in Swamiji she felt she had found someone who really had found the truth and could give it to others.'

'Did Swamiji speak in the Pine Street Home of Truth?' Swami Ashokananda asked.

'He spoke there once, probably in the evening. He also spoke one morning in another Home of Truth in San Francisco where a Miss Lydia Bell was head. In the Alameda Home of Truth he spoke at least twice.'

'When did he go to the Alameda Home?'

'After the lectures closed here on April 14. [He actually moved on April 11.] His idea was to go there to rest for a few days. He wanted, before he left for the East, to accumulate a certain sum of money for some purpose. I don't remember the amount, but I remember that one woman in Oakland gave him a thousand dollars. And someone introduced Mrs Collis P Huntington to him, and she gave him six thousand dollars for Sister Nivedita's girls' school. The money from the lectures and classes, I used to keep in a teapot when we were in the flat. In those days gold coins circulated freely, and I had several pots half full of twenty-dollar gold pieces. One day Swamiji wanted to figure out how much he had accumulated to date, so I got my notebook and pencil and brought the pots and dumped the coins out on the table. After count-

**\$20 gold piece**



**Mrs Emily Aspinall**

ing the money, Swamiji found he needed more than he had so he said we would open some more courses. When he had the sum he wanted, he opened a bank account and deposited the money in it.

‘One woman told someone that she did not like Swami Vivekananda because of the thin little woman who was always running along behind him with the black case. It was I, and the black case held my notebooks, advertising matter, and other things connected with the work—and the collections. Once Swamiji and I stopped in a market to do some shopping, and when we had gone out I discovered I had left the case. I said, “Just a minute, I forgot something!” and rushed back. There was the case, sitting on the counter. It had three hundred dollars in it!

‘There was one conversation at the Alameda Home of Truth which reminds me of your question last week as to whether I had ever seen Swamiji in any particularly exalted mood. I think this was the most inspiring instance except at Camp Taylor. We were seated at the breakfast table in the Alameda Home. Mrs Aspinall, the two Roorbachs, Mr Pingree, the two housekeepers, the two gardeners, and myself. (Those who worked in the Home of Truth centres were all members, who gave their services according to their talents. Mr Pingree, for example, was a teacher, and the only member, incidentally, who demanded any pay: he asked for and got his board and room and fifteen dollars a month.) It was Mr Pingree with whom Swamiji used to walk in the garden of the Alameda Home, and who Swamiji said had an intuition of the conversation of the trees. He used to say the trees talked: he would put his hands on them and say he could understand what they were saying.

‘Well, Swamiji began to talk as we all sat there at the breakfast table. Then someone suggested we go into the front room so that the housekeepers could clear the table. The two rooms were separated only by an archway with curtains hung in them. So five of us went into the front room and the rest went about their affairs: Swamiji, Mrs Aspinall, the Roorbachs, and I took our seats, Swamiji sitting on

a chair facing the rest of us. He talked a great deal of his master that day. Two stories which he said were his master’s I remember, because he directed them at me.

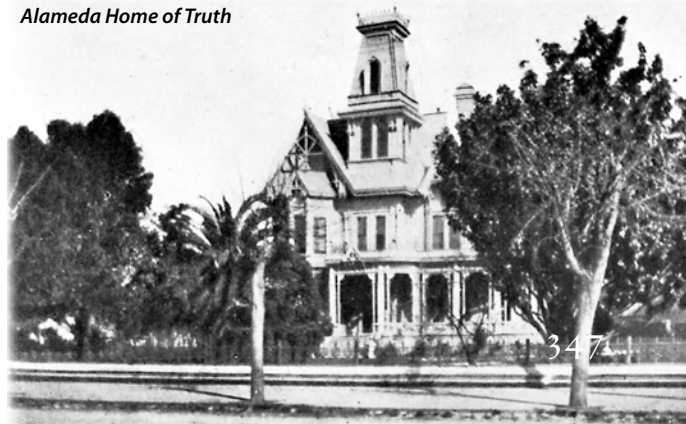
‘The first was a story of an old water-demon who lived in a pool. She had long hair, which was capable of infinite extension. When people would come to bathe in the pool, sometimes she would devour them if she was hungry. With others, however, she would twine a hair around one of their toes. When they went home, the hair, invisible, would just stretch and stretch; and when the old demon became hungry she would just start pulling on the hair until the victim came back to the pool once more, to be eaten up.

“You have bathed in the pool where my Mother dwells,” Swamiji said to me at the end. “Go back home if you wish; but her hair is twined round your toe and you will have to come back to the pool in the end.”

‘The other story was of a man who was wading down a stream. Suddenly he was bitten by a snake. He looked down, and thought the snake was a harmless water snake and that he was safe. Actually it was a cobra. Swamiji then said to me: “You have been bitten by the cobra. Don’t ever think you can escape!”

‘Swamiji did not move from his seat once during the whole conversation. None of us moved from our seats. Yet when he finished it was five o’clock in the afternoon. Later the two housekeepers told us they had tried twice to open the door from the kitchen into the dining room to clear the table, but could not get it open. They thought we had locked it so we would not be disturbed. Even when

*Alameda Home of Truth*





*Left to right: Carrie Mead Wyckoff, her son Ralph, Helen Mead, and Alice Hansbrough; behind is Mrs. Hansbrough's daughter Dorothy.*

Swamiji had finished, Mrs Aspinall was the only one who thought of taking any food. After talking with Swamiji for a few minutes in his room I put on my coat and came back to San Francisco. As we went up the stairs to his room, Swamiji said: "They think I have driven them crazy. Well, I shall drive them crazier yet!"

'My, my,' murmured Swami Ashokananda. 'Did Swamiji talk in a loud tone, or quietly?'

'No, he talked in a low tone of voice,' Mrs Hansbrough said. 'Even in private conversation he was always a calm man, except when he was giving someone a dressing down. (This he never did to Helen or Carrie.) The only time I ever saw him get excited was when the missionary woman called him a liar.'

'He used to talk often to my nephew, Ralph, when he was in our home in Los Angeles. Ralph was then a boy of about seventeen, and used to wait on Swamiji: he shined his shoes and did other little things for him. He would say, "Ralph, my tobacco",

and Ralph would go up to his room and bring it down. Once he asked him, "Can you see your own eyes?" Ralph answered no, except in a mirror. "God is like that," Swamiji told him. "He is as close as your own eyes. He is your own, even though you can't see him."

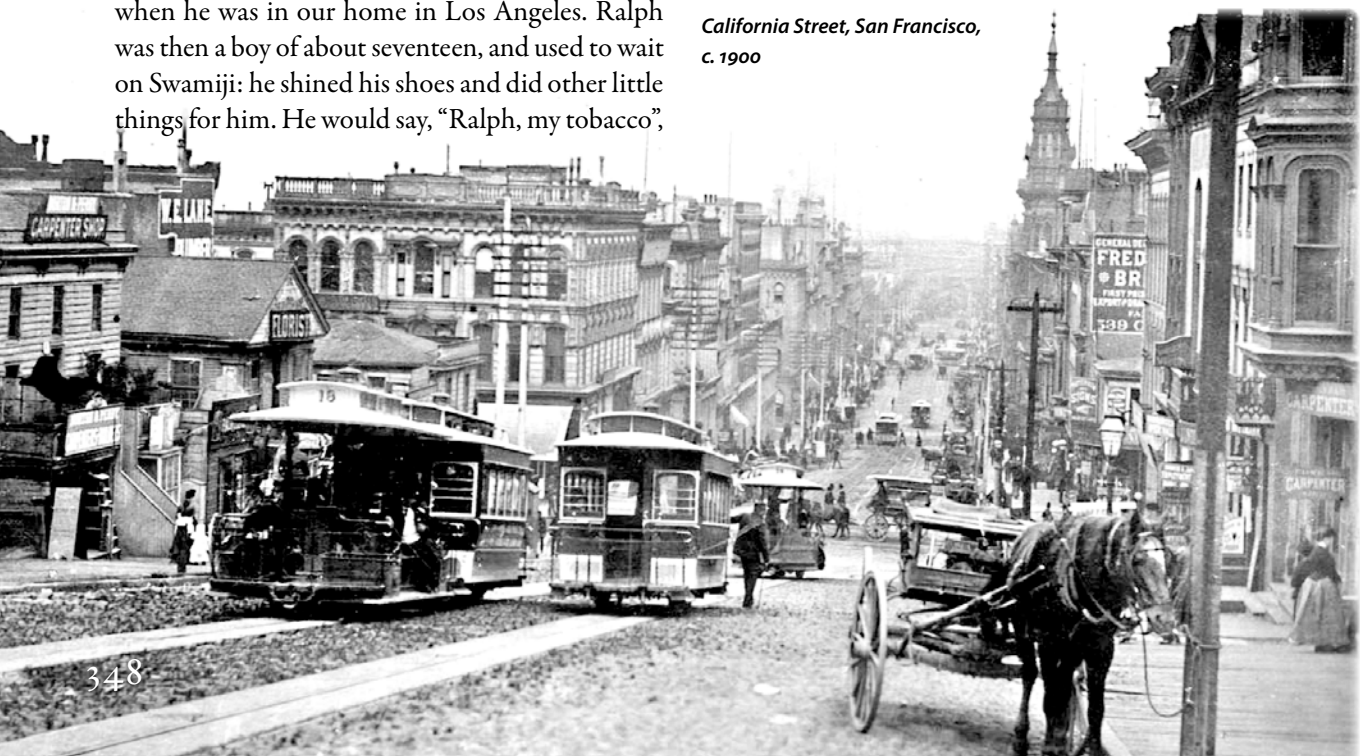
'It must have been one morning in our home in Los Angeles that Swamiji gave what I call "baptism" to Dorothy and Ralph. I remember he laid his pipe aside and called Dorothy to him, and he only smoked after breakfast and dinner. Dorothy was four years old at the time. She went and stood between his knees, with her hands on his thighs. Swamiji put his hands at the back of her head where the hair joins the neck, and tapped up and over the top of her head to the eyebrows. Then he called Ralph and did the same thing. Ralph must have knelt, because I remember that Swamiji did not leave his seat. My two sisters may have been there too; I am not sure.

"What is the meaning of this, Swami?" I asked. Usually I never questioned him, but I did ask him this.

"Oh, it is just a custom we have in India", was all he would tell me.'

*(To be continued)*

*California Street, San Francisco, c. 1900*





# Kanchipuram, the Four-fold Glory: Buddha Kanchi

Dr Prema Nandakumar

*Pushpeshu jati, purusheshu vishnu;  
Narishu rambha, nagareshu kanchi.*

**T**HIS jingle is attributed to Kalidasa. He was certainly a connoisseur of places and might have seen enough of Kanchipuram more than a millennium ago to come up with this crisp verse. Certainly, since the time before Christ, Kanchipuram had been laying down layers of the finest in Indian culture. Even though these earlier days have largely to be surmised, there is plenty of historical documentation about the Pallavas and Cholas, who had a big hand in building the city and its environs.

The original name of Kanchipuram was Kachchi Managar. There have been different interpretations of the word *kanchi*. The Sanskrit term denotes a woman's waist-girdle. But we may note that the place, Tondaimandalam, was perhaps a forest of *kanchi* (river portia) trees, celebrated in ancient Sangam literature. The city itself is referred to as Kachchi in works like *Manimekalai*. It is located on the Palar River. The famous Sangam classic *Perumbanattruppadai* has a wonderful description of Kanchi and its king, Ilamtiraiyan:

Flanked by its belt of defensive jungle is that city /  
Whose doors are never closed to those who seek the  
prize. / Lovely like the pericarp of the many-pet-  
alled lotus / The navel of the dark-hued Lord ...<sup>1</sup>

The king's dominions included the Tirumala Hills, for he is called 'the rightful ruler of the famed Vengada hills'.

It is said that Indians do not have the desire to record history, and hence we find it hard to reclaim the past. But with Kanchipuram it is the immensity of material—religious, spiritual, artistic, literary, sculptural, architectural—that overwhelms us,

and we just do not know where to begin. For, here every stone has a tale to tell, every art a long tradition behind it. Necessarily we have to concentrate on the details in a compartmentalized form lest we get tangled up in the maze of history.

Kanchipuram's socio-religious presence is marked by a four-fold glory. Even today, we are drawn not to a monolith but a four-in-one city: the Buddha Kanchi, the Jina Kanchi, the Shiva Kanchi, and the Vishnu Kanchi. All of them have histories stretching back at least a couple of millennia. All the same, we may not be far off the mark if we begin our Kanchi peregrinations with Buddha Kanchi, for the Buddhist faith seems to have been the earliest to have laid foundations at Kanchipuram.

Thanks to the Girnar inscription of Emperor Ashoka, we are able to surmise that by the third century BCE Buddhism had registered its presence widely in South India.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Tamil Sangam works like *Natrinaidai* and *Madurai-k-kanji* have references to Buddhism. For instance, the latter describes women going to a Buddhist vihara for worship:

Young women held fast to themselves  
Little children ornamented with jewels  
So they would not be lost; kissing them  
And holding firmly their hands  
That appeared like pollen-rich lotus buds,  
They stood there, carrying flowers for worship,  
And scented smoke, singing the glory  
Of their Lord in that Buddha vihara ...<sup>3</sup>

And of course we have the epic poem of the later Sangam age, *Manimekalai*. A good deal of action in this Buddhist epic takes place in Kanchipuram. Manimekalai is a dancer who becomes a nun. She obtains the Amuda Surabhi (nectar vessel) which



produces food without end. This she uses for performing charity. In the course of her travels, she is directed by her grandfather Masattuvan to go to Kanchi, as the city had been devastated by a drought. When she goes there, she finds a temple to Buddha at the very centre of the city:

With her heart full of compassion, the maid  
Went around the fort rightwards, and got down  
Into the central part of the city.  
She prayed at the temple built by the king's  
brother  
To Buddha, who had sat under the Bodhi tree  
Which had golden branches  
And fresh green leaves rivaling emerald.

The king builds a garden in honour of Manimekalai's coming to help his people. Delighted, Manimekalai makes him build a lotus seat for Buddha. She then places the Amuda Surabhi on the lotus seat and welcomes all living beings to gather to be fed. It is an unforgettable scene in which all the marginalized, the hungry, the defeated, and the maimed come to her for succour:

Like life-giving physic for those who ate,  
Like the result of giving alms to ascetics,  
Like the yield when the seed is sown with  
thought  
To water, earth, season, and work in the fields,  
Like rains that fall to help the earth's increase,  
Was the maid compared and thanked by people  
Whose hunger-sickness had been cured by her.

She then meets her spiritual teacher, Aravana Adikal, who instructs her in the Dharma. Her mind illumined, Manimekalai dedicates herself to the ideal life that leads to salvation.

Is this all an epic tale and no more? I realized that the very ancient Buddhist past is very much present in today's Kanchipuram when I went to Arappanancheri, where the sage Aravana is said to have spent the latter part of his life. Today the place is known as Arapperumchelvi Gramam (the place of the Maid of Great Charity). I went into the local temple, which had a huge pipal tree in front. Within was the goddess Paranjoti Amman. The striking thing about this temple is a plaque proclaiming the

following statement in Tamil: 'From time immemorial this village has not allowed sacrifice of any life.' This plaque bears witness to the area having been Buddhist from early times.

History records the names of several great Buddhists of Kanchipuram who spread the Dharma all over the world. Buddhaghosha (fifth century CE), along with the monks Sumati and Jotipala, lived in Kanchi. Aniruddha, author of *Abhidhammatthasangaha*, lived in the Mulasoma Vihara. A Pallava king named Buddhavarman apparently built many viharas. Even today one can walk across a Buddheri street. But one has to peer into unlit corners for vestiges of the Buddhist past. A Buddhist statue on a pillar at the Kachabeshwara temple, a piece of what once was a stupa found in a field ... and the mind races back to the brilliances that had once adorned Kanchi.

Acharya Dharmapala, who entered the Sangha on the eve of his wedding, lived in Patatitta Vihara built by Ashoka near Kanchipuram. He wrote Pali commentaries for some of the Tripitaka texts. He taught at Nalanda University but died young at the age of thirty-two. Ashoka's closeness to Kanchi has been recorded by Hsuan Tsang, who says that a Buddhist stupa built by him was still standing four centuries later. Deepankara Thero, author of the Pali work *Bhujja Madhu*, lived in Balatissa Vihara in Kanchi. Ananda Thero of Kanchi was taken by Saddhamma Jotipala to Burma to spread Buddhism there. There are other revered names associated with Buddha Kanchi: Venudasa, Vajrabodhi, Sariputra ... And among the most famous Buddhists of ancient Kanchi are Dignaga and Bodhidharma. Hsuan Tsang, who visited Kanchipuram in the seventh century CE, records that there were one hundred monasteries with ten thousand monks belonging to Theravada Buddhism following Dignaga's yoga. Dignaga (fifth century CE) was a native of Kanchi and was born in Simhavaktra (Seeyaman-galam). His *Hetuchakra* (Wheel of Reason) inaugurated Buddhist philosophical logic. Bodhidharma (fifth century CE) was a Brahmana prince of Kanchi who became a Buddhist and was trained in the

techniques of meditation by Prajnatarā. He went to China during the Sung rule. Emperor Wu was not pleased with the manner in which Bodhidharma couched his answers.

It is said the Indian monk shut himself up in a Shaolin temple in Honan Province and emerged after nine years with two books. One of them was the famous *I Chin Ching*.

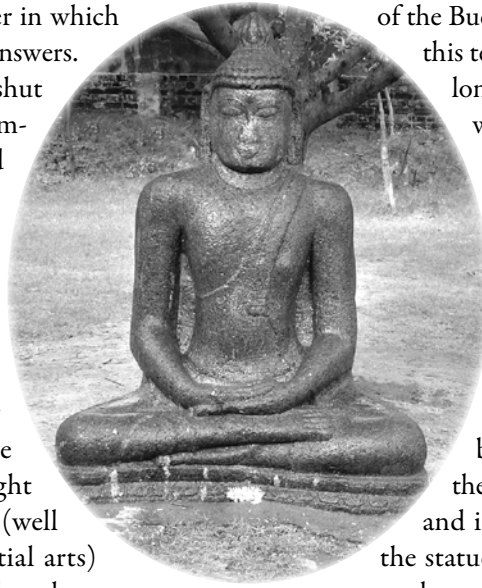
Bodhidharma is considered the founding father of Zen Buddhism. Inspired by the Vajramushti technique prevalent in India, he taught martial arts to the Chinese (well known as the Shaolin martial arts) and also how to control the breath to strengthen the blood and immune system, energize the brain, and attain enlightenment. He is today revered by various names like Bodhitara, Ta-mo, and Bodhi Daruma. He passed away around 534 CE.

One has to mention in the same breath that by the eleventh century Buddhism was very much on the wane in Tamil land. Sectarian disputes and the decadence of Buddhist institutions brought this chapter to a close. As early as the seventh century, the Pallava king Mahendravarman had issued a warning to the monks of Kanchipuram in his farce *Matta-vilasa-prahasana* (Tale of the Drunken Monks). A religion that had established monasteries all over Tamil Nadu, made an undeniably strong presence in the neighbouring Andhra country, and initiated a way of life that had percolated to the tiniest villages in the countryside was reduced to a distant memory with dizzying speed.

So it was not surprising that no one in Kanchipuram could show me around Buddha Kanchi, because there is none present. Other layers have been spread out over what was once a vast complex of Buddhism and Buddhist art and architecture. Wandering in search of artefacts, though, one was

not disappointed. Some of the goddess sculptures in the Kamakshi temple have been identified as that of the Buddhist Tara Devi, and it was in this temple that a Buddhist stupa belonging to the second century BCE was discovered. T A Gopinatha Rao found a standing Buddha sculpture in the innermost corridor of the Kamakshi temple in 1915. This seems to have been shifted to the Madras Archaeological Museum. A Buddha sculpture unearthed near the Ekambreshwara temple is now kept in the adjacent police station. Flower and incense offerings indicate that the statue is held in veneration. It was also cute to find that a devotee had applied an artistic circling of sandalpaste with kumkum to the Buddha's forehead.

Even today, there are quite a few discoveries at hand to keep one inspired. In the Subbaraya Mudaliyar School Ground there is a massive Buddha seated in meditation, presiding over a class held in the open by the teacher, Hari Kumar. You could not find a nobler scene for your camera! Buddhism has had a revival in these parts thanks to social reformer Ayoddi Dasar, who sought to give voice to the underprivileged Dalits. I was happy to go to Koneripakkam to visit a newly built shrine. Kannivel showed me around. The place was neat, and there were *kolam* decorations in front. At the entrance to Koneripakkam: *Buddhar Alayam*



Buddha on the School Ground



the modest structure is a Buddha figure on a broken pillar. I was told it had been retrieved from a nearby place that was being dug up to build a Muslim dargah. The sanctum had a Buddha figure along with a bell, a cup of water, and a plate for ritual worship. Bodhidharma's portrait, gifted by a devout Korean, looked down benevolently from the wall. A Buddha head in a glass case conveyed an amazing sense of peace. It had been found under an uprooted pipal tree. Kannivel told me that the entire space was once definitely a Buddhist monastery.

'Should it always be "once upon a time" for Buddha in Kanchi?' I sighed. Immediately my guide assured me that there is a shining future for Buddhism and asked if I would go over with him to Bodhi Nagar. So we went to Vaiyavur Road and walked across a bit of slushy ground, coming suddenly upon a very clean and peaceful place. Entering it I bowed at the flagstaff and walked a few steps to the Bodhi tree surrounded by a wall built in the Sanchi style. Founded by Ven. Divyananda, the Mahamuni Society is trying to return to the monastic style popularized by the Buddhists two millennia ago. In the shrine there is a statue of Buddha sculpted in Mahabalipuram. The tranquil atmosphere took me back to the epic *Manimekalai*, and I walked out reciting Sutamati's prayer—

Our Lord, self-taught, the essence of faultless things,  
Incarnating in nature's several forms,

*Bodhi Nagar—"Never  
for himself: for the  
good of the world"*

*Bodhidharma  
brought Bud-  
dha's teachings  
to China; here he  
graces the Koner-  
ipakkam temple*



Always living for the good of others,  
Never for himself: for the good of the world  
His penance, with the idea of Dharma.  
Hence his rolling the wheel of Dharma rays.  
He won victory over desire; Buddha's feet  
Shall I praise, my tongue shall naught else do.

*(To be continued)*

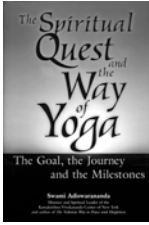
### Notes and References

1. Translated by N Raghunathan.
2. '...within Beloved-of-the-Gods King Piyadasi's domain, and among the people beyond the borders, the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputras, the Keralauputras, as far as Tamraparni and where the Greek king Antiochos rules, and among the kings who are neighbors of Antiochos, everywhere has Beloved-of-the-Gods King Piyadasi made provision for two types of medical treatment: medical treatment for humans and medical treatment for animals. (English rendering by Ven. S Dhammika.)
3. The Tamil term 'Katavut Palli' has been explained as a temple to Buddha by scholars. All translations from Tamil are by Prema Nandakumar, unless otherwise stated.



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications.



## **The Spiritual Quest and the Way of Yoga**

Swami Adiswarananda

SkyLight Paths, Sunset Farm Offices,  
Route 4, PO Box 237, Woodstock, Ver-  
mont 05091, USA. Website: [www.skylightpaths.com](http://www.skylightpaths.com). 2006. 277 pp. \$ 29.99.

The book under review is a lucid exposition of different aspects of practical Vedanta by Swami Adiswarananda, a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York—an erudite speaker and popular author of books on Yoga and Vedanta. The work is in three parts comprising thirteen chapters. Part One presents a survey of different perspectives on the origin and destiny of the universe. It gives an account of Sri Ramakrishna—whose tremendous spiritual fire ignited the Vedic vision in Swami Vivekananda—and the distinguished scholars and religious leaders of his time. It then deals with Swami Vivekananda's contribution to Vedanta, the universal principles of which, the author rightly points out, are echoed in all Eastern spiritual traditions. The essence of Vedanta lies in the realization that the ultimate reality is non-dual Brahman and Self-knowledge alone can root out human suffering. This is attainable through yoga, the aim of which is to control one's mind through 'conscious and deliberate effort'. The author contends that Vedanta's major contribution to global religious thought lies in its 'spiritual democracy, spiritual humanism, and an enduring bond of world unity'. He affirms that nineteenth-century Vedanta tilted more towards mysticism, ignoring its humanistic dimension. Swami Vivekananda, the rejuvenator of Vedantic Hinduism, endeavoured to correct this imbalance. He also worked for a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures by harmonizing their apparent contradictions and stressing the need for mutual sharing of virtues and strengths—not only to survive and succeed, but also to comprehend the true spirit of Vedanta. The section concludes with a discussion of how Swami

Vivekananda successfully promulgated his master's message of 'harmony of all religions' by emphasizing their common grounds: 'Oneness of the Ultimate Reality, oneness of the goal, unanimity with regard to the divine nature of the soul, and the common virtues that are practised by all.'

Part Two examines the theoretical and practical aspects of the spiritual quest, laying stress on the fact that love is the most powerful creative force in the universe. Even though human love (whether it be selfish, idolatrous, receptive, sentimental, or idealistic) is essentially 'cosmocentric', a lack of awareness of one's Self (Atman) makes human beings egocentric, which produces all negative emotions like lust, hatred, and jealousy. True human love is unselfish and non-discriminating, and has the potential to be transformed into divine love. This culmination into spiritual love transforms mortals into immortal beings. The author dwells on the health and fitness of the human mind and its close relation to diet, exercise, conservation of mental energy, rest, and moderation. Right conduct, the author argues, is both a 'spiritual obligation' and a prerequisite for 'ethical and spiritual well-being'. He emphasizes the cultivation of truthfulness, the foundation of the whole edifice of morality. As the core of spirituality, perfect truthfulness in thought, speech, and action is the *sine qua non* for one's spiritual progress. The author also distinguishes true spiritual friendship—wholly unselfish and promotive of others' spiritual welfare—from social friendship rooted in self-interest.

Part Three opens with a discussion on the stages of spiritual development, types of spiritual attainments, and their objective signs. There is an illuminating chapter on vital spiritual questions—what spiritual ideal should I follow, what is spiritual initiation, how much time are we to devote to spiritual practice, what rules are to be followed regarding food, sleep, japa and meditation, and the like. The answers are selected from scriptural texts—Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, the Tantras, *Uddhava Gita*, *Vivekachudamani*, *Jivan-mukti-viveka*—and the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi,

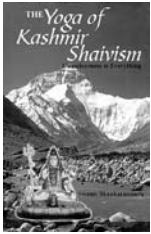
and their disciples.

The author also discusses the different viewpoints on history—St Augustine’s ‘providential view’, Hegel’s ‘idealistic view’, the ‘linear view’ of modern sciences, Spengler’s ‘pluralistic view’, and the ‘cyclical view’ of India and China—to suggest that the Vedantic spiritual interpretation of the cosmos as a cyclical process and of human beings as ‘manifestations of the divine’ makes the purpose and process of history more meaningful. In the concluding chapter, we are reminded that the conflicts and contradictions of our daily life can be resolved neither by manipulation of external nature, nor by intellectual rationalization, nor even by moral perfection, but only by tearing off the veil of ignorance through Self-knowledge. ‘Liberation,’ the author reiterates, ‘does not merely mean goodness and piety but also wholeness, holiness, and self-expansion. It stands for increased integration, dynamic activity, all-embracing love, and untiring self-dedication.’

This illuminating Vedanta manual, springing as it does from the mellowed spiritual experience of an octogenarian monk, will serve as an expert guide to all people interested in the successful application of neo-Vedanta amidst the global problems of the twenty-first century.

Prof. V V S Saibaba

Professor, Department of Philosophy  
and Religious Studies  
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam



### **The Yoga of Kashmir Shaivism** Swami Shankarananda

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 U A Bungalow  
Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007.  
Email: [mlbd@vsnl.com](mailto:mlbd@vsnl.com). 2006. 350 pp.  
Rs 395.

**T**he Kashmir Shaivism of the ninth and tenth centuries is usually associated with four schools: the Kula, the Krama, the Spanda, and the Pratyabhijna. Of these, the first two are the older (fourth century) Tantric schools. The other two came into being as a direct result of new insights provided by the *Shiva Sutra*, which holds the same position for Kashmir Shaivism as the Upanishads do for Vedanta. Kashmir Shaivism is also known as Trika, ‘the three’, because it discusses three subjects: (i) nature of the absolute Reality, (ii) nature of the human being (jiva) and of ‘contraction’, and (iii) methods (*upayas*) by which contraction is overcome and liberation se-

cured. It holds that pure awareness and not matter is the basic stuff of the universe. The one Consciousness that underlies the universe is called Paramashiva. By means of his Power (Shakti), which can be termed his feminine aspect, he creates the universe in his own being, himself becoming the whole universe made of thirty-six cosmic principles (*tattvas*) by a process of contraction. Though born in Consciousness, the created world is real. The universe is actually Consciousness vibrating at different frequencies, becoming more material and gross as it unfolds. Kashmir Shaivism asks us to recognise our similarity with Shiva and ultimately our oneness with him. It recognises a power of contraction and delusion that alienates us from our divine status and makes us human beings. This Shakti is not only real but is actually an aspect of the divine. Having examined the human situation, Shaivism then turns to the solutions (*upayas*), the methodology for overcoming the woes and limitations of the human condition and recovering one’s inherent oneness with God. Thus Kashmir Shaivism gives both a philosophy and methods (*yogas*) for verifying spiritual truths by direct experience.

*Shiva Sutra*, *Vijnanabhairava*, *Spanda Karika*, *Para-trishika-vivarana*, and *Pratyabhijnahridaya* are the primary texts of Kashmir Shaivism. Commentaries by the reputed exponents of the system—Abhinavagupta, Kshemaraja, Utpaladeva, Somananda, and others—are also available. Lucid translations of these texts and commentaries by Jaideva Singh have also been published by Motilal Banarsidass. But these texts follow the traditional ‘aphorism and commentary’ style of presentation, which is sometimes a bit too heavy-going for those who are new to Kashmir Shaivism or who do not know Sanskrit.

In *The Yoga of Kashmir Shaivism*, Swami Shankarananda presents an overview of the philosophy and practices of Kashmir Shaivism. The special feature of this book is that it does not follow any particular text but presents the principles of Kashmir Shaivism with suitable references to primary texts, thus making it easier for the reader to grasp the philosophy. The basic tenets of the system—the identity of Shiva and Shakti, creation as a dynamic play of *chiti* (Shakti), the structure of the universe in the form of thirty-six cosmic principles, the three *malas* (impurities) which cover or limit Consciousness, the three methods (*upayas*) of transcending these limitations, the importance of divine grace, the *matrika shakti* and her play in our lives, and so on—are all well ex-

plained. The author has done well to intersperse the text with details of various methods of meditation and elaborate discussions on selected and relevant portions of the *Pratyabhijnahridaya* and *Vijnanabhairava*. This will definitely benefit earnest aspirants. The inclusion of the texts and translations of the *Shiva Sutra*, the *Spanda Karika*, and the *Pratyabhijnahridaya* in the appendices provides the reader with ready references and an overview of these important texts.

In his introduction, Swami Shankarananda remarks that the book is designed for seekers who are well-established in their practice of Kashmir Shaivism as also for those who have a special interest in it and are curious to know how the discipline would be treated from a yogic perspective. For the latter, it will be useful and worthwhile to study the original texts which cover the technical terms and concepts in far greater depth.

Anyone who has studied the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna as well as Kashmir Shaivism cannot fail to notice the interesting parallels between them. Sri Ramakrishna realized and preached the identity of Brahman and Shakti and worshipped the latter as Kali, the Divine Mother. She is the Shakti of Shiva (Brahman), identical with him, and it is she who has become the whole universe, the living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles (according to the Sankhya system of classification). Her two powers, *avidya maya* and *vidya maya*, are responsible for the bondage and liberation of bound souls. She is to be accepted, worshipped, and propitiated if her grace is to be received. The *Spanda Karika* declares her to be the face or doorway to Shiva (*shaivi mukham iha uchayate*). Shiva in bondage is jiva and jiva freed from bondage is Shiva. Many of the *dharanas* (short meditative exercises) mentioned in the *Vijnanabhairava* are seen spontaneously actualized in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Furthermore, there is an interesting parallel between Sri Ramakrishna's realizations of the states of *jnana* and *vijnana* and the corresponding states of *atmavyapti* and *shivavyapti* in Kashmir Shaivism. Thus it is easier to study and understand Kashmir Shaivism in the wonderful light of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna. Conversely, one is able to better appreciate and profit from the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna by studying Kashmir Shaivism.

The author has rightly pointed out that 'consciousness is an embarrassment to Western science and philosophy because they have no good expla-

nation for it.' However, there is a growing interest worldwide in Eastern philosophies and mysticism in which consciousness is the central theme. '*Chaitanyamatma*, the Self is Consciousness', says the first of the *shiva sutras*. *The Yoga of Kashmir Shaivism* is a timely and welcome addition to the existing literature on the subject of consciousness and will help interested readers understand this important principle of Eastern religions and philosophies.

Swami Tadananda  
Vedanta Centre, Sydney



### **Students' Vows (Vidyarthi Homa Mantras)**

Swami Nirvedananda; trans.  
Swami Atmashraddhananda

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai  
600 004. 2006. E-mail: [srkmath@vsnl.com](mailto:srkmath@vsnl.com). vi + 49 pp. Rs 12.

Swami Vivekananda asserts, 'We shall have to give people newer and fresher rituals. ... Out of the existing rituals, new ones will have to be evolved.' Swami Nirvedananda (1893–1958) was one thinker who did just this. Founder of the Ramakrishna Mission Calcutta Students' Home, he composed the *Vidyarthi Homa Mantras*, Mantras for Seekers of Truth, to guide the students under his care in their student life.

Vows in Hinduism—such as for marriage and *sannyasa*—are taken during a *homa*, or fire-sacrifice. The *Vidyarthi Homa Mantras* fall into this ancient tradition of vow-taking. The five vows, which incorporate sacred verses from the Shruti and Smriti, provide guidelines towards the development of the physical, intellectual, moral, and civic life of a student. When such vows are proclaimed publicly, accompanied by offerings to the Supreme, they make a deep impression on the mind of the proclaimer, and act on the subconscious as well as conscious levels.

The booklet under review is aptly subtitled *A Manual for Character-building*. It includes the mantras in Devanagari and roman scripts, with a straightforward translation and detailed commentary by Swami Atmashraddhananda. The *Vidyarthi Homa Mantras* have been part of the training of students of many educational institutions of the Ramakrishna Mission for many years. With the publication of this valuable booklet, they become available to the public at large

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# REPORTS







# REPORTS

## **Cultural Heritage of India**

Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh released volume VII, part 1 of *The Cultural Heritage of India*, published by the **Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park**, on 3 March 2007, at his residence in New Delhi. Swami Prabhanandaji, secretary of the Institute, and Swami Gokulanandaji, secretary of **Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi**, were among the many dignitaries present. The volume, subtitled *The Arts*, is edited by Dr Kapila Vatsyayan. In the course of his remarks, the prime minister said:

These volumes offer a panoramic view of our splendid heritage. I am not surprised that these volumes deal not just with Hindu religion and culture but also with all religious and cultural influences which have prevailed and which have influenced the course of our magnificent civilization. ... By focusing on the common cultural threads that weave together our diverse religions, these volumes promote the cause of interfaith harmony and co-existence. ...

The seventh volume should add to our understanding of our rich heritage and shape our perspectives on our culture. ... India is a living example of the confluence of civilizations. For thousands of years we have remained open to ideas, thoughts, and influences from all over the world. The creation of an inclusive society and culture in this sacred land owes a lot to this basic synthetic approach.

We need to strengthen such an approach. ... We must derive confidence from the greatness of our past to be able to deal more confidently with the present and the challenges of the future.

## **Blind Boys' Academy Celebrates Fifty Years**

The **Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys' Academy** at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur**, celebrates its golden jubilee in 2007. The academy has been imparting life-centred educa-



*Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, with Swami Prabhananda (left), Dr Kapila Vatsyayan, and Swami Gokulananda*

tion and training to visually impaired boys since 1957. After their schooling and training, the academy strives to rehabilitate the students socially and economically.

The academy offers major courses of study, education, training, and other facilities for rehabilitation of the blind, and also a course in preparing resource teachers for mainstream education. General education up to high school is affiliated to the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. A vocational music course, affiliated to Rabindra Bharati University, is offered to those who have special aptitude and talent for music. In the vocational technical training course, blind adults are trained to handle power-driven machines. Training in agriculture, animal husbandry, and allied areas is also offered to visually handicapped adults from rural areas. The resident students of the academy are provided regular coaching in swimming as part of their physical training.

The academy also offers training courses for blind and sighted teachers of the visually handicapped (BEd Special Education). The courses are affiliated to the University of Calcutta and Bhoj Open University, Bhopal.

Braille books, the essential tools of learning for the blind, are printed at the academy's Braille press, which supplies Braille books to blind students in the eastern and north-eastern regions of India. The academy provides library services to its students, alumni, and research scholars.

The academy has undertaken a community-based rehabilitation project in Gosaba Block of the Sundarbans. It also runs a sub-contract workshop for trained, unemployed, visually impaired youth,



*Blind Boys' Academy: at work and play*

in which various industrial jobs are taken up.

The first phase of the golden jubilee celebrations were held from 18 to 20 January. Sri Gopal Krishna Gandhi, Governor of West Bengal, inaugurated the function.

### **Platinum Jubilee: Taki**

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Taki, established in 1931 through the efforts of Dr Ajit Nath Roy-chowdhuri and Sri Ramakrishna Kundu, observed its platinum jubilee with various functions and celebrations.

The foundation day celebrations of 1 September 2006, attended by more than 1,200 devotees, included music, lectures, and distribution of prasad. Kali Puja was performed for the first time. Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the platinum jubilee celebrations on



*Taki:  
football,  
left, and  
blanket  
distri-  
bution,  
below*



10 September 2006, and Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the concluding session on 21 January 2007, releasing the souvenir *Shashvatam*, and opening an exhibition on science and arts. The celebrations closed on 28 January.

The Ashrama conducts a high school with 566 students, three upper primary schools—one for boys, one for girls, and one for both—with 456 students, a students' home for 69 boys, a charitable homeopathic dispensary, and a library. It also undertakes relief and welfare activities.

### **Achievements**

In a recent State Level Science Fair held by SCERT (State Council of Educational Research and Training) in Agartala, Sayan Banerjee and Anirban Bhowmik, students of class seven, representing **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Viveknagar** school, were adjudged first in the state. Sri Uday Pal, a teacher of the school, was adjudged Best Teacher Guide.

### **New Mission Centre**

The **Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, Durban**, has been made a branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission; the centre is located at 8 Montreal Road, Glen Anil, Durban, South Africa; correspondence should be addressed to PO Box 40002, Red Hill, 4071. A detailed report on the centre will follow.

### **News from Branch Centres**

A new hostel building and a hall at Dhaneti village in Kutch district, built by **Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Rajkot**, as part of the ashrama's village development programme, was inaugurated on 10 February by Swami Smarananandaji.

**Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban**, opened the first phase of its centenary celebrations on 26 and 27 March with Annapurna Puja, a public meeting, and release of a

book on the history of the Sevashrama.

Swami Smarananandaji inaugurated the new Prakashan Bhavan (Publication Block) at **Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad**, on 11 March.

Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, dedicated the shrine of **Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Kadapa**, at its new campus at Putlampalli on 14 March. A three-day function comprising public meetings and cultural programmes was organized to mark the occasion.

Swami Smarananandaji inaugurated the new three-storeyed dispensary building at **Ramakrishna Mission, Shillong**, on 17 March.

### Relief

*Winter Relief:* 10,402 blankets were distributed through the following centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission to poor people affected by the severity of winter: Asansol, 502; Bankura, 40; Baranagar Math, 30; Baranagar Mission, 3,225; Belgharia, 215; Coimbatore Mission, 500; Contai, 100; Kamarpukur, 1,000; Koalpara, 500; Manasadwip, 600; Mumbai, 850; Narottam Nagar, 354; Ramharipur, 1,000; Taki, 477; Tamiluk, 1,000.

*Distress Relief:* The following centres distributed various items to poor and needy persons of nearby areas: Bankura (100 mosquito nets), Baranagar Mission (806 saris, 300 dhotis, 100 mosquito nets, 1,894 pants and shirts, 700 woolen garments, 436 school bags), Narottam Nagar (191 school uniforms, 96 frocks, 525 T-shirts, 100 saris, 226 mosquito nets), Puri Math (204 saris).

Baranagar Mission sunk three tube wells in Santanpur, Bhurkul, and Amarpur areas in Hooghly district, and Hyderabad centre, under its Amruta Ganga scheme, sank a bore well at Kesaram village of Mominpet Mandal in Ranga Reddy district.

*Refugee Relief:* **Ramakrishna Mission, Batticaloa**, continued relief operations among thousands of families who have moved to Batticaloa district owing to ethnic disturbances in Sri Lanka. The

centre provided food items for breakfast, lunch, and dinner to 3,317 persons; 1,030 sets of utensils, 1,200 sets of plates and cups, and 110 water jugs to 1,030 families; and 700 shirts, 800 pants, 1,000 saris, 300 blouses, 400 sets of salwar and kameez, and 400 nightgowns to 1,000 families. Medical treatment was provided for 440 people.

### Obituary

Swami Vandananandaji Maharaj, a trustee and former general secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, passed away on 22 February at Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan, Kolkata, owing to respiratory tract infection with sepsis. He was 91 and had been suffering from old-age problems for a few years. In his pre-monastic life, he was a grandson of Sri Narayana Iyengar (later Swami Srivasananda), a devoted disciple of Sri Sarada Devi. Initiated by Swami Vijnanananda in 1937, he joined the Order at Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, in 1938 and had sannyasa from Swami Virajananda in 1947. He was the editor of *Prabuddha Bharata* from 1950 to 1954. In 1955 he was posted to the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, USA, where he served as an assistant minister till 1969. He was appointed head of the New Delhi centre in 1970 and a trustee of the Ramakrishna Math and member of the governing body of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1973. He was the head of Advaita Ashrama for one year from 1976. In 1977 he was made an assistant secretary of the Math and Mission at Belur Math. He was elected the general secretary of the twin organizations in 1979, in which post he continued till 1985. After relinquishing that post, he spent a few years at Kankhal, Dehra Dun, and other places, and then returned to Belur Math, where he stayed till the end. The Swami's erudition and intellectual abilities, combined with excellent communication skills and affable manners, won him the love and respect of many. 